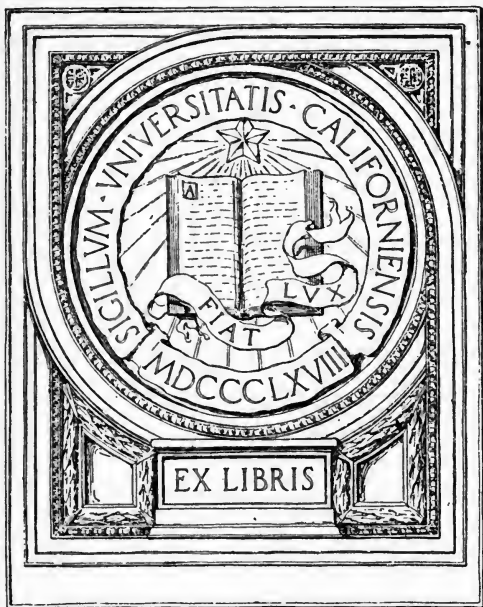


THE
FLYING TEUTON

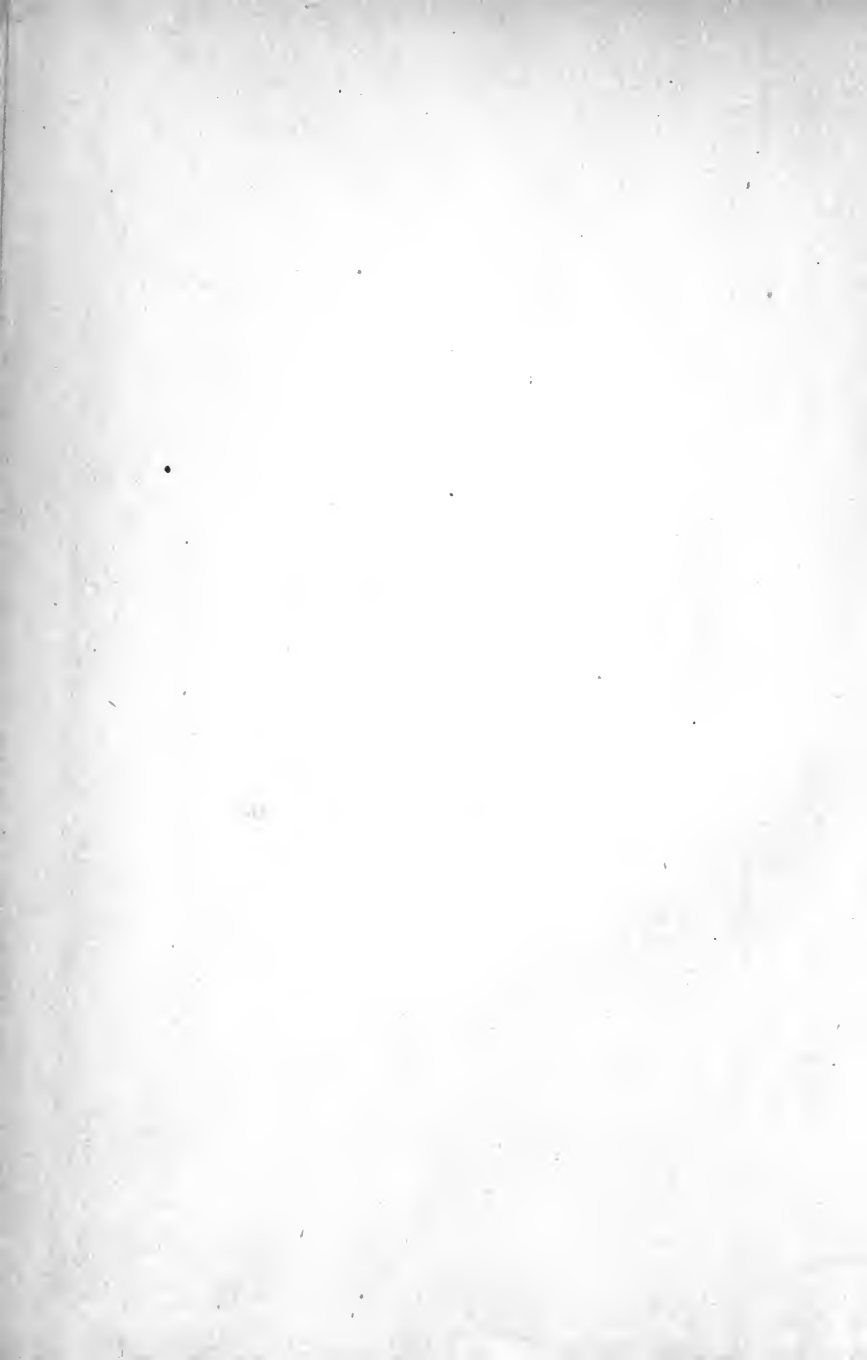
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THE FLYING TEUTON



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TORONTO

The Flying Teuton

and Other Stories

BY

ALICE BROWN

AUTHOR OF "THE PRISONER," ETC.



New York

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1918

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THE FLYING TEUTON

WE were talking, that night, about the year after the great war, which was also the year of the great religious awakening. A few of us had dropped into the Neo-Pacifist Club, that assemblage of old-time acifists who, having been actually immersed in the great war, afterward set humbly about informing themselves on the subject of those passions that make the duty of defensive fighting at times a holy one, and who, having once seen Michael hurl Satan down to the abyss, actually began to suspect you'd got to do more than read Satan the Beatitudes if he climbed up again. There never was anything like the eagerness of these after-the-war pacifists to study human nature in other than its sentimental aspects, to learn to predict the great waves of savagery that wreck civilization at intervals—unless there are dykes—and to plumb the heroism of those men who gave their bodies that the soul of nations might securely live. We retraced a good many steps on wide territory that night, took up and looked at things familiar we were all the better for remembering, as a man says his creed, from time to time, no matter how well he knows it; and chiefly we read over, in its different aspects, the pages of the great revival.

This was not, it will be remembered, an increase in the authority of any church, but simply the recognition in all hearts of all peoples that God is, and that the plagues of the world spawn out of our forgetfulness that He is, and our overwhelming desire toward the things of this temporal life. Whence, in our haste, we sacrifice to the devil.

The terms of peace had been as righteous as it is possible for hurt hearts to compass. Evil had been bound, and foresight had made the path of justice plain. The nations that had borne the first attack (and with what light limbs they sprang to meet it!), they who had learned to read God in that awful unfurling of the book of life, were wonderfully ready to enter on their task of building up the house of peace.

The United States, which had saved its skin so long that it had almost mislaid its soul, was sitting at the knees of knowledge and plainly asking to be taught.

One amazing detail of the great revival was that there would be no industrial boycott. The men about the peace table came away from it so imbued with the desire to save the peoples who had been guilty of the virtue of obedience in following false rulers that they represented to their governments the barbarity of curbing even the commerce of those nations who had set the world ablaze. So it followed that territory and indemnities were the penalties imposed. Boundaries had changed—and so had governments!—but every country was to go back to its former freedom of selling goods in all

quarters of the earth. In their arguments the peace delegates had used the supreme one that "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." They had fixed the terms of all the vengeance they were sure they were entitled to, fixed it soberly and sternly, too. But they did not quite see, having effectually crippled the powers of evil, that they ought also to cripple the powers of good—the desire of nations to sell their products and the work of their hands abroad. So they said, "Vengeance is mine," but they did not go so far as to note that, judging from the centuries, God Himself would indubitably be on the spot. He would repay.

It was in the spring of that year that a German liner, tied up since 1914 and waiting the will of the English fleet, was released and put into commission again and loaded with goods for the United States. On board her was Frank Drake, a newspaper correspondent, who had, after hovering about the Peace Congress, been wandering over Germany, in a desultory fashion, to see what changes had been wrought in her by the war. And it was Drake who sat with us at the Neo-Pacifist Club that night, and was persuaded to tell a story he had, in the year after the Great War, got into print, and so done incalculable service to the muse of history and incidentally made his own name to be remembered. For what he had seen hundreds of others confirmed—only he saw it first, and gave his testimony in a manner so direct as well as picturesque that it might as well have been he alone who sang that epic story.

He was a tough, seasoned-looking man, spare, and hard as whipcord, and with an adventurer's face—aquiline, uplifted, looking for horizons, some one said. At this point of his life he was grey-headed—yet he never would be old. We had gathered about him as near as might be, and really filled the room 'way back into the shadows. He had been talking about the supernatural events that had been inextricably mingled with facts of battle and march and counter-march, and owned himself frankly bemused by them.

“It isn't as if I hadn't actually been in the war, you know. I've seen things. I haven't the slightest doubt a fellow blown out of a trench into the next world meets so many of the other fellows who were blown there before him that it gives him that look—I've seen it over and over—of surprise, wonder—oh, and beauty, too, a most awful kind of beauty. Whatever they saw when they went from the trenches to—wherever it is—they were mighty well pleased to be there, and satisfied that the other fellows could get along without them. And, mind you, things lasted, too, after they got over there. I'm as sure of that as I am that I'm sitting here. The love of it all—the *Vive la France!* you know, the grotesque fondness for Old Blighty that made them die for her—those weren't wiped out by getting into another atmosphere. It's all pretty much the same, you know, there and here, only there you apparently see the causes of things and the values. And you absolutely can't hate. You see what a damned

shame it was that anybody should ever have been ignorant enough to hate."

"You'd say it was a world of peace?" inquired a rapt-looking saint of a man in the front row.

"Don't talk to me about peace—yet," said Drake. "I'm not 'over there' yet, and I haven't got that perspective. As for Peace, too many crimes were committed in her name those last years of the war—too much cowardice, expediency, the devil and all of people wanting to save their skins and their money. Yes, I know, peace is what they've earned for us, those fellows in Europe, and it's a gorgeous peace. But the word itself does take me back. It sets me swearing.

"Yes, I'll tell you about the ship, the *Treue Königin*, and the first sailing from Bremen, if that's what you want. They'd put a good deal of spectacular business into the sailing of that ship because she was the first one after John Bull tied up their navy. There were flags flying and crowds and *Hochs!* and altogether it was an occasion to be remembered. I knew it would be, and that's why I was there. I rather wanted to say I was on the first free ship that sailed out of Bremen, and I hadn't any Teutonophobia any more since Kultur had got its medicine. Besides, wasn't the whole world chanting 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord'? and I'd begun to be awakened a little, too, in my inward parts, though I didn't talk much about it. The voyage began delightfully. I was the only American on board. The rest were merchants going

over to take up relations with us again, and a brand-new consul or two. I didn't have much to do with any of those fellows, and the more things happened the more I didn't see them. I didn't want to get all muddled up with the absurdity of the lay mind's attitude toward evidence.

"Near evening on the second day something queer happened. It was foggy, and I was on deck, talking, in a desultory way, with the first mate, but really wondering if I'd got to sleep to the obligato of the fog-horn all night, when suddenly out of the dark came the nose of a great ship. Our engines were reversed, but not in time, and she struck us amidships. I cowered down. Yes, I did. There was no time for life-preservers and lowering boats. I simply cowered, and put my hand over my eyes. But there was no crash, no shock, no grinding of splintered wood and steel. I opened my eyes. The first mate was still there, a foot or two further from me, as if the apparition had started him toward his duty in case of collision. But he was looking off into the fog, and now he turned and looked at me. I have seen men frightened, but never one in such case as this.

" 'Did you see it?' he asked.

"It was as if he implored me to say I had, because otherwise he'd have to doubt his own reason.

" 'Did she sheer off?' I said.

"My voice sounded queer to me.

" 'Sheer off? She struck us amidships and went through us.'

"I began to stare round me. I must have looked a fool. It was as if I were trying to find a break in a piece of china. There was the deck unoccupied, except for us two, exactly as it had been when we were struck. There were the smoke-stacks and boats, and altogether the familiar outline of the ship.

"‘Well!’ said I. My voice was a sort of croak now. ‘You and I are nutty, that’s all. There never was any ship.’

"But he turned and ran up to the lookout, and afterward I heard the wireless zip-zipping away, and later—for I stayed on deck; I couldn’t go below—I saw him and the captain standing amidships and talking. They looked pretty serious and really a little sick, just as I felt. And I didn’t speak to either of them. Didn’t dare. You know when there’s a fire in the hold, or any such pleasantries on board ship, you’d better let the great high josses alone. Well, that’s what I did. The next day I found the first mate wouldn’t notice me. He spoke English perfectly, but all I could get out of him was a *Nein* or a *Was?* and as stupid a grin as I ever saw on a man’s face. So I understood the incident was closed. And it began to look a little thin even to me, who’d seen it. But the next night, with no fog at all, the thing happened again. A big British liner came down on us, and we did all in the power of navigation to escape her; but she raked us and passed through us from stem to stern, and I swear I put out a hand and touched her as she cut the

length of the deck. For an instant I believed what I know every officer and man on the ship believed at the time—believed madly, for you couldn't reason in the face of that monstrous happening. They believed England had broken the peace, only they cursed 'perfidious Albion,' and I knew she'd got wind of some devil's deed we hadn't heard of, and was at her old beneficence of police work on the sea. But it was only an instant we could think that, for there, untouched, unharmed, at her maximum speed went the English liner. And we, too, were untouched. We weren't making our course because we'd manoeuvred so as to avoid her, and now we lay there an instant, trembling, before we swung about again. Yes, it's a fact; the ship did tremble, and though there was her plain mechanical reason for it, it seemed to be out of panic, just as everybody aboard of her was trembling.

"And that night the ship's doctor, a fat, red-haired man whom I'd remembered as waltzing indefatigably and exquisitely on a trip to the West Indies, but who had been turned into a jelly of melancholy by the war, did talk to me. I think he had to. He was afraid he was dotty and the entire lot were dotty. He had to find out whether a plain American was on to it.

"A pleasant night, last night," he said.

"I knew what he was coming at, and I thought there was no need of wasting our time by preambles.

" 'Yes,' said I, 'till the British liner ran us down.'

"He looked at me—well, I can't tell you how grate-

ful he looked. All melted up, you know, the way those German fattys are sometimes. I stepped away a little. I thought he was going to kiss me.

“‘You saw it, too. God be thanked!’ said he.

“‘Saw it!’ said I. ‘I not only saw her, but I touched her on the elbow as she split the deck. Splendid old lady, wasn’t she? But eccentric. Makes nothing of cutting a ship in two, just for fun, I suppose, and not losing speed. Her little joke. That’s how I take it, don’t you?’

“But I shouldn’t have chaffed him. It shut him up. I think he gathered I was in it somehow. But the fact is, I was scared. Well, if you’ll believe me (and of course you will, for I’ve written the thing out in my ‘Notes on the War,’ and it’s been quoted over and over till even school children know the text of it), so, as you must believe me and the hundreds that corroborated me, in other cases, the next collision, or ramming—what shall I call it?—happened in broad daylight, ten o’clock in the morning. It was a perfectly clear day and a smooth sea. We were in the track of the freighter *Marlborough*, and by George! she didn’t make way for us. She ran through us as neat as wax and cut us in two. But we didn’t stay cut. We didn’t show a crack. And there she went churning off, as gay as you please, and we steamed on our way. Only we weren’t gay, mind you. We were scared. And the doctor, ghastly again, came stumping across the deck to me, and I thought he was going to fall into my arms.

“‘*Lieber Gott!*’ said he. ‘What does it mean? We see them, but they don’t see us.’

“That was it. We’d been slow in taking the hint, but we’d got it at last. We were invisible on the seas. We were practically non-existent. And we’d tried wireless. We’d sent out call after call, and finally, desperately, S.O.S., because we knew, if there were a conspiracy against us, no ship but would listen to that. No answer. We were marooned—if you can be marooned on the high seas. Civilization had put us on an island of silence and invisibility. Civilization wasn’t going to play with us any more. But it wasn’t civilization at all. It wasn’t any punitive device of man. It was something outside.

“For the next two days the doctor hardly left me. I suppose he was forbidden to talk, and he had to keep near somebody or die. He wasn’t the man he was when he tripped the light fantastic in the West Indies. He’d been through the war, and now he was going through something worse. And he said to me the morning of the day before we were due in New York:

“‘Now we shall be picking up the pilot. And I sha’n’t go back. I’ve got a married daughter in New York. I shall spend the rest of my life with her.’

“And, as we went on, we sighted ship after ship. It was a gay day for ships. You don’t know how many there are until they won’t notice you. And not one of them would turn out for us or answer our

call. And everybody was desperate now on board, though we had learned we were safe enough, even if they did run us down. So we put on all speed and forged ahead and rammed whatever got in our way—and never sank them. Never seemed to touch them. But with every one we hit and never hurt our panic grew. Desperate panic it was, from the captain down to me. Then we came on the pilot-boats, quite a distance out, for of course everybody knew we were coming and there was a little rivalry about it all. Just as I'd wanted to say I'd crossed on the first liner from Germany, every pilot wanted to be the one to take us in. Well, the first one was making for us and we hailed him. But, by God! he didn't slacken speed, but dashed through us. That little bobbing boat ran through our High Mightiness and went careering on in search of us. And we went on in search of another pilot. And we sighted him shortly, several of him; and, though they didn't ram us in that ghostly way they had, they went sliding by us, bowing and ducking to the breeze, and always—that was the awful part of it—looking for us. There we were, and they didn't see us. And we hailed them and they didn't hear.

“By that time we were all pretty nearly off our nuts, and it took us different ways. The captain was purple with rage and that sense of injured importance the Deutscher didn't lose by having to toe the mark after his big war bubble burst. He swore, and I heard him, that he could take his own ship into New York Harbor as well as any con-

demned pilot that ever sailed, and he wouldn't even hail another, not even if all the dead in the sea rose up and faced him. I was rather worried over that about the dead in the sea. I couldn't help thinking that if all the dead recently in the sea rose up and combined against any German ship, it would have short shrift. But we were all, I fancy, rather glad of his stand. We had full confidence in him. He was a clever, daring fellow, heavier by the iron cross—for in the last years he'd sent scores of men unwarned to the bottom, and he had been precious to Kultur. We much preferred to go in un-piloted to making even one more grisly try at proving we were living flesh and blood.

"My own particular obsession was to wonder what would happen if, when a ship clove our decks and left them solid, as they'd done so often in the past six days, I put myself in the way of its nose. Would it run through me like a wedge and I close up unhurt? Would it smash me, carry me with it off the deck, to Kingdom Come? I wondered. It didn't smash life-boats or deck-chairs. It—I found I was beginning to call the ramming boats 'it,' as if there were but one of them, though really there were all kinds of craft—it would go through a rug on the deck and leave it in its folds. But I hadn't the sand to put myself in its way and find out beyond a peradventure whether it tore me, nerve from nerve. The drama was too absorbing. I wanted to see it through.

"I did once, in my most daring minute, stand at the

rail, watching a freighter as it came, head on. And I yelled to the lookout, when we were near enough to pass the time of day, yelled desperately. I can see him now, a small man with a lined face and blue eyes screwed up into a point of light, as if the whole of him concentrated on feeding that one sense, just seeing. And there was a queer-shaped scar on his face, a kind of cornerwise scar, and I wondered how he got it. The freighter was making her maximum, and so were we; but in that fraction of time I waited for her it seemed to be hours, eternities, that I had my eyes on the little man with the scar. It seemed as if he and I alone had the destinies of the world to settle. If I called and he answered me, it would prove our ship was not lost in a lonesomeness of invisibility more terrible than any obvious danger on the unfriending seas. Suppose you were in hell, and you met face to face somebody that had your pardon or your reprieve mysteriously about him, and the pardon and reprieve of all the other millions there—think how you'd fix him with your eyes and signal, call to him for fear he'd pass you by. Well, that was how I signalled and called the little man with the scar. But he stared through me out of those clear lenses of his eyes, and when I yelled the loudest he made up his lips and began whistling a tune. It was a whispering sort of whistle, but I heard it, we were so near. And the tune—well, the tune broke my heart, for it was an old English tune that made me think of the beautiful English country as I had seen it not many weeks before, with the people soberly

beginning to till it with unhindered hands. And here were we on a German ship that the world wouldn't even see. The sun himself wouldn't lend his rays for humanity to look at us. And then, as I began to cry—yes, I cried; I'm not ashamed to own it—the freighter passed through us, and I felt the unsteadiness of her wake. The lookout and I had met in hell, and I had hailed and he had not answered me.

“Was I glad to see the Goddess of Liberty and the gay old harbor of New York? I believe you! We went on like a house afire, and once, when I caught a glimpse of the captain's face, I decided he could steer his ship into any harbor against unknown reefs and currents, because there was a fury of revolt in him, a colossal force of will. And as I thought that I exulted with him, for though nobody knows better than I do the way the Furies ought to be out after Kultur—oh yes, they'd have to or lose their job—there was a kind of fighting grit that came up in me, and for that voyage I was conscious that the *Treue Königin* had got to fight, fight, for existence, the mere decency of being visible to other men.

“Did we sail into New York Harbor, invisible or not? You know as well as I. The story's as real as George Washington and Valley Forge, and it'll stay in print, like them, as long as print exists. We stopped short, an instant only it was, and then against the impetus of the ship and the steering-gear, and against the will of her captain and her crew, she turned about and steamed away again.

And, by the Lord! it was as graceful a sweep as I ever saw a liner make. I remember thinking afterward that if there were heavenly steersmen on board—the Furies, maybe, taking the wheel by turns—they knew little tricks of the trade we pygmies didn't. At first, of course, this right-about didn't worry us. It didn't worry me, at least. I thought the captain had found it a more difficult matter than he thought, and was going down harbor again, for some mysterious nautical reason, to turn about and make another try. But pretty soon I saw my fat doctor making for me. He was ash-colored by now, and he kept licking his dry lips.

“‘We're going back,’ he said.

“‘Ah?’ said I. ‘They don't find it so easy?’

“‘Why, good God, man!’ said he, ‘look at the sun. Don't you see your course? We're going back, I tell you!’

“‘Back where?’ I asked.

“‘But I didn't care. So long as we made New York Harbor within twenty-four hours or more I wasn't going to complain.

“‘Where?’ said he. He looked at me now as if he'd got to teach me what he knew, and I thought I'd never seen eyes so full of fear, absolute fear. Nothing in mortal peril calls that look into a man's eyes. It has to be the unknown, the unaccounted for. ‘How do I know where? I only know the ship's out of our hands somehow. She won't answer.’

“‘Well,’ said I, ‘something's the matter with the machinery.’

"You see the bright American air, the gay harbor, the Statue of Liberty—everything had heartened me. For an instant I didn't believe we really were invisible.

" 'The machinery's working like a very devil, but it's working its own way. You can't turn a nut on this ship unless it wants to be turned. You can't change your course unless this devil of a ship wants it changed.'

"I laughed out.

" 'You've been under too much of a strain,' said I. 'You seem to think the ship's bewitched. Well, if we're not to dock in New York, after this little excursion down the harbor, where is it your impression we're going? Back to Germany?'

" 'God knows!' said he, solemnly. 'Maybe back to Germany. I wish to God we were there now. Or maybe we shall sail the seas—eternally.'

"I laughed again. But he put up his hand and I stopped, his panic was actually so terrible. I was sorry for the beggar.

" 'Wait!' said he. 'I thought that would happen. I wonder it hasn't happened before.'

"A man came running—the quartermaster, I found out afterward—and I had one glimpse of his face as he passed. He covered the deck as if he were sprinting and was near the goal, and suddenly the run seemed only to give him momentum or get his courage up, and he slipped over the rail, with a flying confusion of arms and legs, into the sea. I yelled and grabbed a lifebelt and ran to the rail,

where I knew there'd be sailors, in an instant, letting down a boat. I threw my lifebelt, and kept on yelling. But no one came, no one but the doctor. In an instant I realized he was by my side, his hands in his pockets, his eyes fixed in a dull gaze on the sea. And we hadn't slackened speed, and we hadn't put about, and I saw two other sailors idly at the rail, looking as the doctor looked, into the vacancy of immediate space.

" 'For God's sake!' said I, 'aren't they going to do something?'

" 'There's nothing to do,' said my doctor. 'He won't come up. They know that.'

" 'Won't come up? Why won't he?'

" 'Because he doesn't want to.'

" 'Didn't you ever hear of the instinct of self-preservation,' I spluttered, 'that steps in and defeats a man, even when he thinks he's done with life? How do you know but that poor devil is back there choking and praying and swallowing salt water, and sane again—sane enough to see he was dotty when he swapped the deck for the sea?'

" 'He won't come up,' said the doctor. He turned away and, with his head bent, began to plod along the deck. I couldn't help thinking of the way he used to fly over the planks in the West Indies. But he did turn back again for one word more. 'Did you,' said he—and he looked a little—what shall I say?—a little ironic, as if he'd got something now to floor me with—'did you ever happen to hear of the *Flying Dutchman*?'

“Then I understood. They’d understood days and days ago. The words had been whispered round the decks, in the galley even, *Der Fliegende Holländer*. Knowing better than I what Kultur had done on the high seas, they had hit sooner on the devilish logic of it. They were more or less prepared. But it struck me right in the center. After they’d once said it I didn’t any more doubt it than if I’d been sitting in an orchestra stall, with the score of the old ‘Flying Dutchman’ and the orchestra’s smash-bang, and the fervid conductor, with his bald head, to divert me for a couple of hours or so. And I went down into my cabin and stretched out in my berth and shut my eyes. And all I remember thinking was that if we were going to sail the seas invisible till doomsday, I’d stay put, and not get dotty seeing the noses of ships cleaving the deck or trying to hail little whistling men with scars on their faces and finding that, so far as they knew, I wasn’t in the universe at all. I think I dozed for a matter of two days. The steward brought me grub of a primitive sort—our cuisine wasn’t what it had been coming over—and news, whenever I would take it from him. There had been more of the ghastly collisions. We had picked up S.O.S. from an English ship and gone to her rescue, to find we could neither hail her nor, though we launched boats, approach her within twenty feet. Why? The same reason that prevented our going into New York Harbor, if you can tell me what that was. And in the midst of these futile efforts a Brazilian freighter came along and did

the salving neatly, and neither ship was any more aware of us than if we had been a ship of air. But my chief news, the only news that mattered, I got from the steward's face. It was yellow-white, and the eyes were full of that same apprehension I had learned to know now—the fear of the unknown. He brought sparse items he dropped in a whisper, as if he had been forbidden to speak and yet must speak or die—about the supply of water, the supply of coal. It was his theory that, when the coal actually gave out and the engines stopped, we should stay everlastingly tossing in the welter of the sea, watching the happy wings of commerce go sailing by and hailed of none. But that proved not to be so, and when he told me that it scared him doubly. For we economized coal to the last point, and it proved the engines went excellently without it, so long, at least, as we kept our course for Germany. Evidently, so far as we could guess at the designs of those grim powers that had blocked our way, a German ship was to be aided, even by miracle, to sail back to Germany, but not to enter any foreign port.

“And we did go back to Germany, meeting meantime other German ships just out, and we hailed them and they saw us and answered. And the same fear was on the faces of every soul on board, and the news was in every case the same. They were, to all the ships of all the world, invisible.

“We slunk into harbor, and I have never known how the captain met his company or what exporters said to the consignments of merchandise returned un-

touched in the hold. I only know that the shore officials looked strangely at us, and, since we told the same mad story, seemed to think a whole ship's crew could hardly be incarcerated. You must remember, too, that since the war signs and wonders have had a different value. There have been too many marvels for men to scout them. There was the marvel of the victory, you know. But we won't go into that. I suppose books will be written about it until the end of time.

"You may be sure of one thing—I didn't let the grass grow under my feet. I made tracks for Holland, and from there I put for England, and sailed from Liverpool, and was in New York in a little over five days. And by that time the whole world knew. German ships were in full possession, as they had been before the war, of the freedom of the seas—except that they mysteriously could not use it. German ships took passengers, as of old, and loaded themselves with merchandise. But there was not a port on the surface of the globe that could receive them. Yet there was a certain beneficence in the power that condemned them to this wandering exile—they could go home. And so strange a thing is hope, and so almost unbreakable a thing is human will, that they would no sooner go home in panic than they would recover and dare the seas again, as if, peradventure, it might be different this time, or as if the wrath of the grim powers might be overpast. And it came out that the shipping rotted in their harbors, and there were many suicides among sailingmen."

When Drake reached this point in his story he almost always got solemn and rhythmic. His book was succinctly and plainly written, but he could never speak of its subject-matter without the rhythm of imagery.

“You know,” he said, “it wasn’t expected, while the war was going on, that there would be a living being, not of Teutonic birth, who would ever be sorry for a Teuton until near the tail end of time, when some of the penalties had been worked out. But, by George! the countries that had been injured most were the first to be sorry for the poor devils that had prated about the freedom of the seas and now had to keep their own ships tied up in harbor, tight as in war-time, because the fleet that withstood them, drew the mighty cordon, was the fleet of God. Belgium had prayers for the German fleet. England sent experts over to see what was the matter with their engines. Russia prayed for the boats, as she had for her four-footed beasts in the war, and France—well, France proposed that she and England should establish a maritime service from Germany to the United States and South American ports, with nominal freight rates, until the world found out what the deuce was the matter or what God actually meant. And it was to begin the week before Christmas, if you remember, and something put it into the clever French brain that maybe a German Christmas ship—a ship all full of toys and dolls—might be let to pass. France didn’t think it was bamboozling God by swinging a censer of sentiment before Him; but it

knew God might be willing to speak our little language with us, encourage us in it, let us think He knew what we were trying to tell Him when we took the toys and dolls.

"And, if you remember, a string of ships went out that day, all with pretty serious men on board, men of an anxious countenance. And the British and French ships convoyed them like mother birds, and other British and French ships met them, and for a time no Teuton ship dared speak a foreign one for fear it should not be answered. But finally one—it was my old ship, the *Treue Königin*, and on her my old captain—couldn't wait any longer, and did speak, and every French and English boat answered her, and she knew she and the rest were saved—for the eyes of man could see them and the ears of man were opened to their voice. And that's all. You know the rest—how the German navy slowly and soberly built up its lines and sailed the seas again; but how nobody ceased talking of the wonder of the time when it was under the ban of judgment. And nobody ever will cease, because of all the signs and marvels of these later years this was the greatest."

"I have heard," said the pacifist in the front row—"I hardly like to mention it; these things are best forgotten—that there is one submarine that actually does sail the sea, and never has found rest. But that, they say, is sometimes visible."

"Yes," said Drake. He looked grim now, and nobody could doubt that he knew whereof he spoke. "She is sometimes visible. She plies back 'and forth

along the Irish coast. I'd heard it over and over, and I'd heard that on the seventh of May she shows her periscope. She is obliged to. And they say she has one passenger—the Man We Do Not Mention."

"Do you suppose—" began the pacifist, and Drake interrupted him:

"Do I suppose that sentence ever will be worked out? Maybe it isn't a sentence. Maybe it's a warning, against pride and cruelty and lust of power; maybe the Man We Do Not Mention is condemned to sail it, and sails it in fear and hate. But maybe he sails it in humility by now, and is willing to be hated, so long as he can be the warning to the world—the warning against his sins. Do you know, I've often wondered if he knows one thing—if he knows that, whenever toasts are drunk in Germany, it isn't now *Der Tag*, but it is, since that day when England and France joined hands to help their scared old enemy, 'The Fleet!'"

"He'd think it meant the German navy, anyway," said a younger, unregenerate man, who was no pacifist—only, being young, too quick of tongue and rash of apprehension.

"Oh no, he wouldn't," said Drake, a very warm tone in his voice. It told youth it didn't know what its elders had been through. "He'd know it meant—The Fleet!"

THE ISLAND

JOHN HADDON went down with one of the first passenger ships "*spurlos versenkt*" and, after varying tragedy and bewilderment, survived, and I was told by an intimate friend of us both the extraordinary impression the catastrophe and the rescue had stamped upon his memory. I never for a moment believed we were to accept the tale as anything but the sad overflow of disaster left in a mind submerged and then bared by the receding tide. I was convinced, and this without surprise, that Haddon had suffered shock and never recovered from it, that he would be moved by unhealthy or at least disturbing recollections to the end of his mortal time. And then I met him face to face, when we were both going over, the next year, on business connected with the Allies, and he came straight to me and made himself known. I'd heard he was on board, and had expected to see a man not quite rectilinear in his relation to other normal things, twisted by the fire and ice of what he had been through. But there walked up to me on deck a fine, keen, bronzed athlete with far-seeing blue eyes and an extraordinarily sweet smile on resolute lips.

"I'm Haddon," said he. "I know who you are. Wentworth has talked about you."

So at once we were cronies, beginning a good number of steps further on from our common acquaintance with Wentworth, and being warmly ready to continue. We ate and lounged together and had long subdued talks when we ran through the dangerous dark, a black speck on a blacker waste. We didn't mention shipwreck or the perils of the sea. Although he was such a daylight sort of person, with nothing even of the haze of fancy about him, I understood that was the thing which should be tabu. But one night when we were talking the dark away, he brought a thrill into my breath by himself grazing what I thought that danger line and in as commonplace a manner as if he had been describing a stroll on Broadway.

"You know," he said, "I went down in the *Artemisia*." (That name will serve.)

"Yes," I said, gulping, "Wentworth told me."

"He didn't need to," said Haddon, with a little laugh. "Of course we were all pretty well known, by name, at least. We were very much in the public eye—necessarily. You can't find yourself the victim of a hellish tragedy and not continue to be a marked man throughout your natural life. Did Wentworth tell you what really happened to me?"

"He told me you were one of the last picked up," I said. I was in a fever of wanting to say the right thing, knowing what even a word might recall to him. "He said it wasn't apparent exactly how you were saved, how you'd kept afloat so long, or what the live-preserver was—"

"He knew perfectly well what it was," said Haddon, in a brusque but indulgent kindness. "So do you, only you can't account for it and so you don't want to mention it and go wrong. Don't mince matters. You needn't. I don't."

"Well," said I desperately, "he said the life-belt hadn't belonged to the *Artemisia* at all, but that old tramp, the *Elsinore*, that was lost a dozen years ago."

"Precisely," said Haddon. "That was what happened, and it's never been explained and never will be, except by me, and if you don't believe what I say you'll be no better for my opening up to you. Did Wentworth tell you I took that trip on the *Artemisia* just because Amy Lake was going over and I was in love with her and couldn't let her go alone?"

"No," said I, a little shocked that Wentworth's reticence on so fine an issue could be suspected for a moment. "He didn't mention her."

"No, of course not," said Haddon. "I knew it, really. But that was the fact. Did you know Amy Lake?"

I had seen her once and never forgotten her, a tall sweet creature in light grays, a winter outfit that made her look appropriately like some fleet, fine animal, through an invulnerable yet sensitive strength adapted to rigors and winter snows. She had come into a vociferous tea-room for a minute, and drunk her sip or two with a healthy relish and gone away again, leaving a blankness over all our talk and a duller atmosphere.

"I was in love with her, of course," said Haddon quietly.

The tone was an implication that he didn't really need to say it to a person of ordinary penetration. I took it acquiescently. I thought so, too. She was one of the women who, without challenging the senses, leave such an impression of beauty and harmony that all men not of the roughest type can at least see why some men should adore them.

"I hoped," he said, "I should have opportunities on the voyage such as I'd never had, get nearer her, you know, understand her a little and let her see I was trying to. We'd always been separated by a lot of things before, other people, relatives, the general gregariousness of what they call society, and after the war began, the whole terrible business. That, of course, did bring us together in essentials. We were both getting ready to go over to England and being hindered in ways you can guess. But somehow we didn't talk much about ourselves; the desperate big thing overpowered us and prevented it. But on that voyage we began to take each other for granted. We recognized—I did, as a matter of course, and I very soon guessed she did—we recognized we'd got more to say to each other than all the other passengers—and the world, for that matter—had to say to either of us. We saw at last our interests—our spiritual interests, you must let me say—were identical. I like to tell you this because I want you to see how the things that happened afterward, after the sinking, were founded

on what came legitimately all along. I should be ashamed to keep it to myself as something sacred when it might start out a writing person like you into charting certain facts that ought to be common possessions if we're ever going to believe in the sanity and security of the universe again. We'd talked, that last night, about the Island you see from Innishmore. You know about it."

"I hadn't thought of it for years," I said, "until Wentworth reminded me, and then I knew I'd heard a particularly sweet ballad singer sing about it, and I remembered a line or two."

"Yes," said Haddon. "Amy remembered more than that. She'd copied the whole ballad, and sang it to me in a purling little whisper. Of course, when I came to life again after the *Artemisia* devilment, I looked up every word there is about the Island. There isn't much. You're most likely to see it from Innishmore, but not only from there but when you're at sea off the Irish coast. One of you writing persons says it's seen only in certain lights or moods of the mind." Now Haddon's voice took on the measured carefulness of one quoting from another who perhaps wrote in a style foreign to his own homespun speech. "It is an island that is sometimes actually seen. But mostly it isn't there. And when it is there it is almost always when the traveler is setting out for far shores and his heart is full of longing to return. Some might think it the embodiment of his longings. Some might call it a mirage of hope. It is believed also that not only

is the island visible in beatific or passionately sorrowful states of mind, but that it actually does exist in the Atlantic, though again it is withdrawn. Whether it is a sort of amaranthine flower of the past no one knows, or whether the mind, projecting into the future, creates a jewel of its own in a waste of sea. You can imagine," Haddon concluded, dropping his tone of heedful recollection, "how an emigrant, starting out from the old country in the days of the longer voyage, saw it in the sunset light, all golden turrets and shimmering mists."

"They called it, didn't they," I asked, "the paradise of the pagan Irish?"

"It is the paradise of more than the pagan and more than the Irish," said he. "It's a stepping stone, a refuge—well!"

That last word held an infinity of meanings. It seemed to draw pitying attention to the guidebook childishness which accounts for things and stops contented and his own happier estate now that he knew.

"The next day," he said, "that noon, that luncheon—but I won't talk about that."

"No," I put in hastily. I wanted to spare him the rehearsal of the tragedy. I had an unreasoned feeling he'd go all to pieces if he tried to travel that watery road again and tell what the sea had done to him.

"But after luncheon," he went on, "I couldn't find her, and for some reason I didn't understand then I was desperately anxious to. You see the

time began to look so short, and however closely I might be able to tie up our destinies and plans over there, it wouldn't be the same as that shipboard solitude. Besides, I felt as if we should be caught up and whirled round in such a sea of bigger things that my own paltry desires would have to wait indefinitely, as if there'd be no question but I should want them to wait. Everything would be war. Well, I went on deck and I saw her there before me not ten paces away, and she turned to me smiling, and—it came. I've never had any heart to talk about the sensations of the minute because, for me, they all involved her. The whole thing was connected with her, as if a colossal power had risen up, hostile to her, and had accepted that tremendous destruction as a condition of its being able to destroy her with it. I felt as if I were leaping, the whole of me, to get to her before we were separated forever, and yet maybe I didn't move before I was crushed and suffocated and snuffed out. That part of it is where my brain fails me. I didn't know, I don't know now, where my consciousness stopped, whether I did struggle and it went on faintly and faded out at last, or whether I was hit. When I came to myself I simply was alive, delightfully alive, and in another place. It was an Island, for there was the sea. It had the verdure of the British Isles, but its atmosphere was unlike anything I'd seen. And there was Amy close in front of me, and we laughed, we were so glad, and she said to me:

“‘The Island!’”

“‘Do you think so?’ I asked, for it looked more beautiful than the song, and was really so impalpable in spite of its reality that I couldn’t fit it into any previous conception.”

“‘But look,’ she said, ‘all that golden mist. And the towers. They’re not real towers. They’re sunlight, don’t you think?’”

“‘Oh, yes, they’re real enough,’ I said. ‘Don’t you see how they come out of the rock itself?’”

“‘That’s not rock,’ said she. ‘It’s as misty as the towers.’”

“‘Well, it’s solid, too,’ I said, and then I realized we were talking absurdly. We were simply trying to fit old expressions to new uses, and the real fact was also that our eyes were giving us more data than our minds could use.”

“‘How did she look?’ I asked. ‘Amy?’”

I had to call her that. The strange thing that had happened to her seemed to remove her absolutely from ordinary customs of speech.

“‘Why,’ he said, ‘that’s the queer part of it. She was herself, and yet different. I was amazed at her. I puzzled over her. She was beautiful, you understand, more beautiful than ever. That was it. I at once got the idea I’d never seen the real Amy, and this was she. Maybe I was different, too, for she said to me suddenly—and laughed—‘How nice you look!’ But I don’t know.”

“‘I mean,’ I ventured, though it seemed a childish thing to insist on, ‘what did she wear? The same things she had on when you saw her on the deck?’”

"That's it," said he. "That's the big puzzle. Wentworth asked me that, and though I've almost hammered my head to think, I couldn't tell him. Whatever it was, it was beautiful. And familiar. Beyond that I don't know. And I don't know about the other people either."

"Oh, there were other people?" I asked.

"Scores of 'em, and all busy, and for a while all hurrying and talking. It was evidently a time of unusual excitement. For there were ships coming in—sail boats, beauties—and people landing from them. And everybody was met and evidently made to feel it was tremendously nice they'd come, and there was a good deal of laughing and relief. That's it. There was relief in the air, as if there'd been a cloudburst and now the sun was out and people were saying to one another, 'It didn't do any damage, after all.'"

"And did you really think you were on the fabulous Island?" I asked.

I wanted to pin him down to as literal fact as he could manage.

He laughed.

"Not for an instant," he answered, "then. Amy'd said so, you remember, and I partially agreed, but it was only because we were so light-hearted we said the first things that came into our heads. Really, I was perfectly sure we were on the coast of Ireland. I assumed that, without a doubt. And when things had quieted down a little and our passengers were dispersing, going off by ones and

twos with the Island people, I went up to the Tall Man—”

“Who was he?” I interrupted.

“I don’t know. I never even heard his name.”

“You don’t assume,” I hesitated, “it was —” and this was the only way I could end—“some one supernatural?”

“Bless you, no,” said he. “I call him the Tall Man simply because he was tall and I don’t know his name. And he was most certainly some one in authority. I went up to him and said, ‘Can we hire any sort of conveyance to take us to Queenstown or somewhere else where we can get passage for England?’

“And he looked at me, a long look, and smiled. And then I knew. But I didn’t dare look at Amy. I thought it might frighten her, you see. But I might have known. She’d guessed it from the first. She took my hand, and we stood there like two children, not in any way distressed, but coming out of a wood-path to an open door, a little curious and pretty excited.

“‘Don’t you see, John?’ said Amy. ‘Don’t you know?’

“And then I said it. My voice sounded strange to me.

“‘Am I—dead?’

“For the minute I forgot her. I rather think the soul has to face that one thing alone, and now it was my turn to face it.

“‘Yes,’ said Amy. It was the most commonplace

‘yes,’ you ever heard. She might have been encouraging a child, after he’d come out of some bad business like an anæsthetic. ‘Now let’s get to work. Isn’t there something,’ she said to the Tall Man, ‘we can do?’

“He was immensely pleased with her. She seemed to have been clever in accepting it and adapting herself, as you might say.

“‘Yes,’ he said, ‘there are lots of things you can do.’—And I’ve got to break off right here and say I don’t know whether those were his actual words. But it was the sense of them. And then he looked doubtful and queer. ‘The fact is,’ he said, ‘I’m not sure, you know, whether you’re both going to stay.’

“‘Oh, you mean,’ said Amy—and when it comes to her I could swear to every word—‘you’re not sure whether we’re both dead.’ It seems astonishing to me, the way she used that word we hate so, lightly, you know, as if it meant something rather warm and pleasant. And then she snatched at my hand and held it tight. ‘We’ve got to be,’ she said. ‘If one of us is, the other’s got to be, too.’

“‘I know,’ he said. He seemed to understand perfectly. ‘And it may be so. But I have a kind of a doubt—’ and then he seemed to recall himself and remember he mustn’t say more than he actually knew. ‘Anyway,’ he went on, ‘it doesn’t matter, and for the present, at least, you’re on the Island. And you’ve come at a time of a good deal of anxiety for us—’

“‘How can you have anxieties,’ said Amy, ‘if you’re all dead?’

“He smiled at her.

“‘Aren’t you anxious?’ he asked.

“And that reminded her.

“‘Of course,’ she said. ‘Why, I hadn’t thought. I’d forgotten them—father and mother. But they’ll be hearing—oh, think how it’ll come to them. In an instant, maybe a cable message, maybe a line in a newspaper. Oh, how horrible of me to be happy for a minute!’

“‘That’s it,’ he said. ‘You’ve got to be anxious so long as you love anything on the earth—that is, while the earth’s in the state it is now. And we’re anxious about England.’

“‘Then you’re English,’ I asked, ‘all of you.’

“‘No, no,’ he said. ‘But we used to belong to her, you see, we were a part of her. I mean, the actual Island. And those old birth bonds hold. Why, look at me. I’—he smiled at Amy—as if he must indulge her—‘I died, we’ll say—and I don’t mind the word—a long, long time ago, and yet I never’ve been willing to leave here.’

“‘Could you leave?’ Amy asked him quickly. I think she saw herself hurrying back to America for a minute—invisible herself, maybe—a minute of comfort for her father and mother. ‘Is it permitted?’

“‘Oh, yes,’ he said, ‘anything’s permitted. The things that wouldn’t be permitted you simply don’t want to do. But there’s no particular pleasure in

elbowing about among the others—the ones that are, so to speak, alive. (I'm using all your terms. It's simpler.) Besides, you realize that when you're dead (your term again, you see!) your place is among the dead. And people keep coming to us—just as you've come—and there are the drowned ships. We have as much fun getting them into dry dock and setting them afloat again as we have in receiving the drowned sailors.'

"‘Were those the ships?’ Amy put in quickly, and he nodded at her.

"‘Yes,’ he said, ‘those were the good drowned boats that didn’t want to go down and are mighty glad to get up again and feel the hand of man on them, man that made them. You don’t suppose a boat can’t love its creator do you? the one that shaped and guided her?’

"‘But,’ said Amy, ‘if all those lost ships were on the ocean, we couldn’t have helped seeing them and running into them. Or,’ said she—and I can tell you she wrinkled her eyebrows at him. You know that way she had—‘aren’t they real ships, or only the souls of ships? Just as I suppose we’re souls now and our bodies are off there in the sea?’

"‘She could meet it all, without a quiver. I couldn’t. I didn’t want to think of my body’s being out there, fathoms down. But the Tall Man was smiling at her with that look he had for her and not once for me. No wonder!

"‘You’re going too fast now,’ he said. ‘I can’t help you. I mustn’t. You’ll know it all in time.’

“Then he turned suddenly to a green walk that led up to one of the misty temples. I call ’em temples. What do I know? I don’t know what they were used for ordinarily, nor how they were built, nor whether, if you struck ’em, they would hurt your hand. I only know they were outlines, a sort of enchanting outline that made you contented and pleased when you looked at it. And a lot of people were going toward it—not our *Artemisia* crowd, but the others, those that had met us and been kind.

“‘I told you we are anxious,’ said the Tall Man. ‘That’s a sign of it. It means we’ve got to talk things over.’

“He was moving away, as he spoke. I saw he was suddenly in a hurry—anxious, like the rest.

“‘Oh,’ said Amy, ‘mayn’t we come?’

“He stopped and looked at us, kindly, but a little doubtfully.

“‘Why, yes,’ he said then. ‘I think so. Nobody ever does come—so soon. But you’re different. At least, one of you is.’

“And then I began to understand it was I he meant when he said maybe we couldn’t both stay there, and I held to Amy’s hand and made up my mind I’d never let it go. And she held mine just as tight. She’d had the same thought, you see, and she was determined, too. But she was tremendously interested—curious, in a darling kind of way—about the Island and it made her audacious, even.

“‘Then we’ll come,’ she said to him. ‘Let us go

along behind you, and of course if the others don't like our being there they'll say so.'

"He smiled in that indulgent way he had, and I gathered from it he knew if he vouched for us it would be enough and that he was somebody very important in relation to the others, and he walked away and we followed.

"Well, we went along, and when we got inside what I call the temple—and after we were once there the walls didn't look like walls any more—it was just a large place,—when we were among the others we lost him and then saw him later, up on a kind of dais where they went to speak. At least it must have been a place higher than the rest of the temple—there I go, you see, calling it a temple!—or else the ones that spoke looked taller than the rest."

"Were they sitting?" I asked him, "the audience, I mean?"

"I'm not sure," he said. His voice sounded troubled. I could believe he was finding it more and more disturbing, as time went on, to realize how inexorably his memory of the event was losing its clear edges, growing less distinct. "I seem to remember them standing. I can't repeat the words of their discussion, but I do remember the sense of it. That will never leave me. They were in a state of anxiety, as he had said, and trying to see whether something couldn't be done. They were all perfectly agreed; that wasn't the ground of discussion. They were pulling together absolutely, and the point they were

after was whether they couldn't make themselves known, as an island, you see, a possession, to England. They were doing all they could to help, receiving the dead and that kind of thing, and God knows what else. They may have been fighting the submarines, for all I know, with their invisible fleet. But they wanted England to know they were there, safeguarding when they could and comforting all the time. And then it came over me with a great rush that England not only had her daughter colonies, fighting for her, the cubs as brave as the lion, but she had her invisible colonies, too. They were round her like a guard of not mere human steel, but heavenly fire. Amy saw it, and we looked at each other and felt we'd begun to understand the universe a little bit, not the surface of things we'd been stumbling over up to now.

"But I had a thought I didn't like. Logic, reason, you know what a nasty way they have of putting a heavy hand on the curb of your high horse.

"'But,' I said, 'if England's got invisible cohorts fighting for her, Germany must have the same kind. And they'd be pretty formidable, those old scalawags, Barbarossa and his horsemen and the whole gang.'

"'I don't think so,' said Amy. 'When we die, we see things differently. They must have got something out of being dead, just as we have, and they've been dead centuries and we only—is it weeks or minutes? I don't believe Kultur looks very attractive, even to a German, if he's got out of his skin and begun to look with the eyes of his spirit. No, they

wouldn't help Germany. They'd see she mustn't win. They'd know it would only be prolonging her childish bluff and brutishness. What they'd want most would be to have her humbled so she'd see she'd got to crawl up out of her slime. But England—well, you know what you said on shipboard. That no matter what England had done in the past, to other nations and her own poor, it happens now *she's right.*

“And as I looked at Amy and saw how alive she was, how eager, how understanding, how perfectly able to weave her past into the strange present and make them equally alive, my fear came over me that she was to stay here and, unless I was somehow let to hocus fate, I was to go. I hadn't dropped her hand and now I clutched it tighter and drew her away.

“‘Come,’ I said, ‘we must find some place of our own.’

“She was still thinking about the heavenly cohorts fighting for their earthly mothers, and though she didn't resist me she evidently went on in that same groove.

“‘Just think,’ she said as we went out together, ‘what it must be for the dead Germans, not bound, as we are, to a just and wonderful cause. They've got to know they can't help. It wouldn't be permitted. They can only pray and suffer shame.’

“I didn't answer. I saw before us a long alley, made by slender trees that seemed to throw a green light across the path, one to another, in an enchant-

ing kind of way. The trees themselves were opaque gems and the light through them was pulsating and clear. I wish I could describe it to you. But I can't. You'll see those things sometime. (So shall I—again. And mighty soon, too. I'm as sure of that as I am we're sitting here tonight. That's why I take it as I do—not having her, you know.) I hurried Amy along the path so fast we seemed to skim the ground without touching it. Don't you know that dream we have of floating? You just give a little push with a tiptoe, and you're above the ground, willing yourself to go. And while we hurried, not breathlessly, but with a pleasurable sensation as if nothing nicer could happen to us than wafting along a green path, I had the queerest sensation that the path was ours, that nobody'd used it or even seen it before. And we came out on an open space with trees round it—not slender, like the path trees but big, round, populous, with spaces in them and coverts for a million birds. A green city, that's what each tree was, all full of plots and courts and alleys under dancing leaves."

"Were there birds?" I asked. Every time he stopped for a minute I felt as if he might actually break the thread and leave me lost on my bewildered way.

Again he was perplexed and troubled.

"About the birds," he said. "I've thought of that. And I can't be sure. I tell myself it couldn't have been so happy if there hadn't been birds. A tree like a green city and no birds to live in it—that's

desolation. I think I heard them. Actually I do think so. Only they weren't songs I can remember. Except one. I've thought it might have been the skylark, not just an English lark, you know, but Shelley's." He laughed a little here, as if he could allow himself an occasional tender romancing over the inexhaustible riches of the place.

"And I did hear the sea, softly lapping on the shore. Well, I made Amy sit down with me and I held her hands, thinking all the time how tight I must cling to them to keep something—destiny or what we call life—from dragging me away from her. And then I told her about my fear. She was to stay, I told her, and I was to go. She looked at me seriously and I was plunged deeper and deeper in my misery to find she knew at once it was to be. But whereas I was distracted she was grave and—different. Calm, perhaps—that was it—as if she saw the end of things I was only guessing out from the beginning. But I had my plan.

"‘Now,’ I said to her, ‘we’re here alone. We’ve escaped from them all, and they’re too busy to think of us. And this is our place. We must build us a house and live here—stay absolutely by ourselves, so nobody’ll be reminded of us.’

"‘It won’t do any good,’ said she, very grave, but not unhappy as I was. And then she laughed a little as if she liked me tremendously and wanted me to have my way, even for a minute or two, to soften things for me afterward and she said, ‘Still, it won’t do any harm.’

"Then all the strength I'd got came up in me—I don't know whether it was will or muscle—and I made up my mind I'd show the Powers I was as strong as They were, and I said:

"Very well then, we'll build our house.'

"I got up and so did she, and we went to work. And to this day I don't know whether we talked about the house and what sort it should be, or how we found material, or whether we actually worked. I seem to remember tools of some sort and going round whistling and Amy's singing and her reminding me of old jokes and our agreeing we'd been so silly 'way back before we came here not to have been married the first day we met.

"For we knew then,' said Amy. 'Not that it makes any difference now.'

"And suddenly the house was built and we stood looking at it. And it wasn't walled with mist like the Islanders' temple, but it was a good deal like some of the old houses we'd seen and talked about on shipboard. It was palpable to the eye and the touch—oh, you never'll understand me here; I can't express myself—and yet it was different. We loved it. When I looked at it I forgot my fear and Amy seemed to put aside her sad certainties. And I got daring and wished for the moon, and the moon came. Do you know, I never've looked it up to see if there was a moon at that particular time because I'd rather think it was our moon, the moon of our thoughts. And we stood at a window, looking at it—I must tell you about that window, though,

before I forget. I'd wanted a 'magic casement,' like Keats's

opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

And, if you'll believe me, I got it. Don't ask me what it looked like. I simply got it, that's all. And we knew it was that window and no other. And it was while we stood there looking at our world that she said to me:

"'You like to stay in the house, don't you? You'd rather do it than explore the Island.'

"I felt sulky, just because of my fear.

"'Yes,' I said. 'It's our house. We'd better stay in it—while we can.'

"The last words I hadn't meant to say. I didn't like to remind her of my fear.

"'Yes,' she said, 'you stay in the house because you think they won't find us when they want us. But they will.'

"Then she called me a name I won't tell you. But sometime I shall hear it.

"I didn't see why, if the Island itself wasn't visible to passing ships, our house should necessarily be visible to the Islanders themselves. There were queer rules here, I told her. We didn't know just what would obtain. But all the time I knew there was nothing in it and so did she. She began to talk, quietly.

"'You've heard the sounds, haven't you, even when we're in our house?'

“‘I’ve heard the sea,’ I told her.

“‘I’d made up my mind that was all I’d own to.

“‘You’ve heard more,’ said she. I could see she was terribly sorry for me now, not so much for herself because she’d begun to learn the end of things, and besides she saw some kinds of grief are of no use. ‘We both have. We’ve heard their music—and their bugles—sometimes I think when we heard the bugles we ought to have gone. I suppose that was when more ships came in and brought more—dead.’

“I believe then I began to cry. Anyway I had a feeling of breaking up and going all to pieces, and as we do sometimes in nightmare I began to say the same thing over and over. ‘For God’s sake!’ that was what I kept saying, and though I never could finish I knew she understood perfectly well what I was trying to pray. Not to leave me, that was what I was praying to her, whatever they said or did to her, not to leave me. And her face began to grow fainter and fainter, though she bent over me—I felt I was on my knees crying to her—she bent over me to give me the sight of it to the last. And it’s my one best thing in life now to remember her hands held mine tighter and tighter and wouldn’t let them go. And then there was a great clanging in my ears—I thought it was the Islanders summoning me to tell me I’d got to part from her, and I began to have a queer pain and misery. And I woke up. And there were two men I’d never seen, and I knew

instantly the worst had happened. I'd been rescued and Amy was dead."

"About the life-preserver?" said I, because I knew we could never come back to this again and that was the most mysterious thing of all to me. "I couldn't understand—"

He got up and shook himself a little, as if he cast off the dust of old perplexities.

"You never will," he said. "You'll have to do as I do: believe it and accept it and be satisfied not to understand. The amount of the matter was that when I got on my feet I hunted out the boat that picked me up. I had a feeling that among so many incredible things they might have found Amy, too, and seen her dear body later than I did. But they hadn't. Only, just as I was going over the side, the captain followed me, and he said:

"'That was a queer thing about your life-belt. It was off the old *Elsinore*. How'd you come by it?'

"'Why,' I said, 'I didn't come by it. There wasn't any time for life-belts.'

"'But you had it on,' said he, '*Elsinore*, marked plain. I commanded that ship once myself.'

"'Then where is it?' said I.

"'I've got it down here below,' he said, and he went off to fetch it. But he came back in ten minutes or so, and he was more puzzled than I was. I'd seen the Island fleet, you remember. 'It can't be found,' said he, 'high nor low. But we shall come on it. I'll send it to you.'

"But he never did. I knew he wouldn't. He's

written me once or twice about it. I believe it scares him, rather."

"But it doesn't scare you," I ventured.

"I should say not," he said. He laughed a little. "Some things I know. Nothing scares me now."

THE EMPIRE OF DEATH

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It is true that the most extraordinary and exact coincidences happen, as if pieces in the mosaic of life, made to fit together in some mysterious forecast of destiny, rush toward each other and are finally joined. The common motive of brother meeting brother or friend meeting friend from opposing ranks of a war is a not too crudely obvious one. It has happened over and over again, as if the two had been journeying toward each other by intent, and out of all the millions of men who accompany them, are unerringly accurate in their direction and their destiny of a poignant recognition or a last sickening sequel of wild warfare.

This story, told by an American for a time in the Foreign Legion and then disabled and, by noteworthy privilege, allowed to join an observation party in March of this year, 1917, is entirely true according to his psychology. I am ready to assert it is true also in a definite sense made to fit all outward facts as well.

"Let me go back," he said, that afternoon when I sat by his bedside while he talked to me and tried to explain the message he wanted to send to a girl in New Hampshire. "You've got to understand just what my connection was with Hugo and with her, too, before the war began. So I want to tell

you the whole business. That's not to be repeated to her, mind you. Only that I saw Hugo, and that he's—'safe,' you can tell her. But I suppose I want, too, to pass over what happened—pass it over to somebody else. I'm tired of owning it alone and shutting it up inside me: for I don't know whether it's a treasure, you see, or only a strange secret. And anyway it's got to be shut up, unless you want to write it out, with a change of name, so that the people playing the old games—buying and selling and thinking the world will last their time, and that going to church once a week and putting a check in the plate is enough to ensure their communication with the heavenly powers—so they'll get to wondering whether perhaps after all there isn't something between God and man that hasn't been entirely mapped out. And if there is, whether they'd better not explore a little before they're called on to take the unknown country at a dash and perhaps suffer terrors actual as hunger and thirst. For one thing I'm sure I've learned out of my own neck-and-crop pitch into futurity—that 'in my Father's house are many mansions.' And not all of the mansions are for the soul to inherit and take its ease in. Some of 'em are deserts full of torments; and they're none the less His mansions. And if you ask me why one man should be singled out for punishment when millions of men have committed the same offenses in his company, I tell you you don't know where those other millions are. For space—the 'mansions'—is illimitable, and every man that

sins is pretty sure of getting a lonesome hell of his own.

“Now—Hugo and I were chums at Harvard. I’d never understood why he was there; when the rest of us were dying to get to Germany to study, he came from Germany here. His father was back and forth between us and Berlin, on vague business never quite defined. We assumed it was connected with imports; but before the war there was no particular curiosity about it. You won’t have seen this, because you don’t know his name; but the other day he was proved guilty of hostile propaganda and indubitable plotting at munition plants, and, according to the amiable, tolerant habit of our government, merely interned. But then, when Hugo and I were trotting round together, he was simply a beneficent deity, pocket full of money, always ready to blow it in for theatres and dinners, and simply the best comrade a set of fellows could find in a man of middle age. He sang German songs to admiration, and he never took the fatherly pose of ‘you’ll think so when you’re older.’ He was apparently one of us.

“When we came out of college, Hugo and I, we ran right along in the same groove. I wanted to write things—I’ve a kind of a gift of words—and I determined at the same time to be a farmer. Farming’s in my blood. My grandfather was a farmer. He could graft trees and do all kinds of witch work with them. He anticipated this wave of growing improved apples by a good many years. While

other people were rubbing along with old apple trees set out on side hills where you couldn't cultivate 'em and close to the stone wall where every apple that fell would get a nasty disfiguring bruise, he set out several acres with healthy little trees, and ploughed and fertilized and thinned the fruit, and pruned and scraped; and, if you'll believe me, it was that orchard that sent me to college. And better than that, I inherited the apple passion, and so, when I came out of college, I bought me a farm up in New Hampshire, and settled down there to write, and incidentally to grow fruit.

"And Hugo was with me. I don't think he wanted to be at first, but his father encouraged it in his big-voiced way, and bought some adjoining land for him and I've since fancied I saw why. We weren't so far from Canada, and I've guessed he wanted our little acreage for a base. Also, Hugo fell in love with Annie Mills. So did I. She was the daughter of the farmer next me, a quarter of a mile away, and kept house for him, and the first time we saw her—coming home from the woods she was, with her hands full of violets—well, I'm pretty sure each of us felt then what we kept on feeling till the war gripped us—and afterward. And when I say she was coming home with her hands full of violets you mustn't see any Sweet Lavender kind of girl in a pink sunbonnet and dialect on her tongue, ready to be awed by two college fellows. O Lord! you know, Annie'd had her course at a mighty good seminary, and she read her Greek for fun and be-

cause she liked it; whereas, if you asked me to translate at random, without context, I should be nowhere: not even come in by freight. So Hugo, having seen her, settled down with me and read books on forestry and his father encouraged it, and I wished the devil would fly away with him and not bring him back till I'd got Annie.

"Yes, give me a drink, but don't stop me. I'm going to keep right on till this story is told. If I get it off my chest I sha'n't do so much 'seeing things at night.'

"Annie was a discreet and level-headed little person, but she hadn't any eyes for me. It was all Hugo. Terrible nice to me, you understand, but in a sort of maze about him, hypnotized, you know, what's called being in love. Or, no. Sometimes I think she wasn't in love yet, only on the way to it. And Hugo's dad took up his share in the hypnotizing. He stayed with us from time to time, and sang German songs to her and made love in a kind of indirect fashion—nicely, you know, quite straight about it. Only, as an older man preparing the way for Hugo and turning the world upside down with the romance of everything as if he'd built a kind of palace with flowers to walk on and birds singing, for Hugo to lead her into and propose to her. Do you get me? I mean the whole atmosphere of our New England neighborhood, so far as we three were concerned, was back in some kind of super-civilization America hasn't a glimmer of, except through poetry and pictures, and Annie was being asked indirectly

but in every way possible to accept the freedom of the city in a golden box.

“Her father? Annie’s father? Oh, he didn’t know what was happening. He was road commissioner, and he was sitting up nights figuring on harder roads for the automobiles, and over the motors—how to trap ’em better for over-speeding and so pay for the roads. And Annie was a wonder. She kept her gait. Only I could see her eyes grow big and black when she was pelted with the whole German Empire, and I had an idea if Hugo asked her right off the bat, she’d have to say ‘yes.’ You may think I was a fool not to ask her myself, but it was a fact I didn’t dare to. I felt as if I stood for New Hampshire with her and the kind of person that would turn into a road commissioner some day, and I felt as if a joggle of the wheel might give me a chance to offer her some little glamour myself. It’s no use saying I cherished any high-minded horseback determination to let Hugo have her because he was my chum. Not a bit of it. If I could have shipped him off to Siam I would, and ‘father’ and his German songs with him. Some days they got most infernally on my nerves, and I cursed myself for walking into the combination as I had or inviting it to walk over me.

“And then the turn of the wheel came, in August, 1914, and everything was different. In the first place father disappeared, lock, stock and barrel. Whether he said good-by to Hugo I don’t know. He didn’t say good-by to me, and I rather resented the

unfriendliness of it and didn't ask about him. But Hugo had letters from him, and the post-mark was Canada. But straight off I found out things weren't the same between Hugo and me. He got rather strained and quiet; I can't tell you what effect it had after knowing him those last years when he was always banging round and whistling and singing. Now he was mum as a fish. He wouldn't talk about the war—not to me, though he did, I found out, talk to Annie. For she grew mum and white, to the same degree, and one day when I overtook her on the path through the Cathedral Woods she asked her question, right out from the shoulder. I'd gone into the woods to think things over, and so had she, and we were both just enough keyed up so she had to put her question.

“‘Arnold,’ said she, ‘what do you think about Belgium?’

“It was just after that deviltry, you see, while we, the ones of us that see straight, and mean to act straight, were almost out of our minds with the helpless, mad desire to do something, and the others—well, the others it's better, to the end of time, to forget them. Don't you say so? What's the use of keeping on poisoning our own blood with the just contempt we've got to feel for 'em? Well, I told her what I thought, as well as I could, I don't know in what words. Maybe I didn't choose 'em for their academic flavor. About that time I was fed up with academic puddling. And I saw she thought she'd got it hot, but maybe no more than she ex-

pected, and the light, what little there was of it in her face, paled out and she walked along with her head bent.

“‘Yes,’ she said at last, ‘that’s the way I feel.’ And then she lifted her head—she’s a gallant girl, Annie—and she said, as if it might be a kind of challenge to me to understand she identified herself with him, ‘But Hugo can’t feel so.’

“‘Can’t he?’ said I.

“‘I found myself mumbling. I’d spent what heat I had on Belgium.

“‘No,’ said she. ‘There are all his traditions, you see. He has to be loyal to Germany.’ He’s German to the backbone.

“‘Well!’ said I.

“‘That was literally all I could say. I wanted to ask her if Hugo wasn’t the son of a German who’d got himself naturalized in the United States, and whether he mightn’t stiffen his own backbone accordingly. But I didn’t. I felt as if I’d lost them all, Hugo and his father inevitably, and Annie, because, though she stood with me about Belgium, she seemed to have accepted their point of view, for them, which was, to my way of thinking, giving a kind of intangible aid and comfort to our spiritual enemies. But this I knew. If Hugo was even emotionally a citizen of Germany at this crisis—for that first crisis, you know, was like a great questioning fiat from a moral judgment seat—where did a man stand? And he that was not for the devil was against him—well, if Hugo was with the devil as he had been revealed

walking abroad under a Prussian helmet—was he to sit at my table any more? Was I to break bread with him? I didn't say another word to Annie nor did she to me, and at the edge of the woods I left her and turned back into the Cathedral aisle. And, if you believe me, I stayed in the woods all night. I sent word to Hugo by a boy that came up through from fishing, not to expect me, that I was off trying to find a strayed calf—which was absurd, because we hadn't any cattle pastured and Hugo knew it. But I had an idea he wouldn't be enough interested in my movements to pin me down to facts. And perhaps he'd been as uneasy with me as I was with him. And when I did go back, next morning, dew-soaked and cold and sort of awkward about meeting him, he'd gone, and the housekeeper told me it was for good. He'd gone to the war.

“‘And it's for Germany,’ she kept saying. ‘Mr. Grant, ain't it queer? he's goin' to fight for Germany.’

“And I told her it wasn't queer—quite natural, for he was a German. And I waited for her to tell me he'd left me something, a letter, of course, or if not that, some sort of message. But he hadn't, for she didn't say another word, and even before I had breakfast I went over the house hunting for his good-by—the living-room, his room, mine. Not a word did I find. He'd disappeared just as if his father'd given him the formula.

“That day I went to see Annie and her face told me he hadn't gone without saying good-by to her.

She was as serious as we are after a sobering blow, not a girl now, a woman.

"I couldn't talk to her till she'd answered me one question.

"Are you engaged to him?"

"I asked it plump and she answered as if it was a natural thing to ask and I'd every right to an answer.

"No," she said. 'I couldn't. I'm puzzled. I had to think things over. Belgium.'

"Yes," I said.

"And then I asked how long she was going to think things over, and she said:

"I don't know. Till I can stop being puzzled, I guess.'

"Well, Annie," said I, 'I'm going, too. Only I shall fight on the other side.'

"And before she could think she put her hands together and the red ran into her face and she said:

"Oh, bless you! bless you! I wish I could go, too.' And then she remembered the thing that was hurting her so, and she said, 'If you see him, won't you write me?'

"I sha'n't see him," I said, 'among ten million Germans. But I'll write you anyway.'

"And the next day I was off, up through Canada and over to the other side. The queer part of it was I hadn't thought of going till that minute facing Annie's eyes. It seemed as if she'd made me go. And maybe Hugo had, too. It was as if he'd challenged me and I'd got to make sure he didn't throw

his little weight in for Germany without my throwing mine on the other side.

“Well, I’ll skip all my dodges to get over, and what happened to me there and how I got my first wound—I’ve been sort of unlucky, you know—and then my good luck of getting a little pull, enough to put me into the observation party that followed along after the French when they banged the Germans into their ‘strategic retreat’ in March of this year. And you know what those same Germans that are bamboozling Russia now with their peace terms did when they retreated: how they blew up villages and poisoned wells and wrecked houses and destroyed fruit trees. Now that last is what I’m coming to—the destruction of the trees. I can forgive ’em my game leg, even if it never straightens out, and I can fancy in minutes I have sometimes when the sun’s shining and it looks as if we’d got ’em on the run and somebody reminds me ‘all’s right with the world’ that God may make a try at forgiving ’em for the houses and the gardens and the women—but I can’t go into that. Honestly I haven’t the nerve. Sometimes when it comes over me—the women I know about, the ghosts of children I’ve seen with my own eyes—well, I’m afraid I shall just go daffy lying here, with sheer mad. But—and this is what I’ve been coming to all this time—so long as I keep my brain to invent curses and my tongue to utter ’em, I never’ll forgive the destruction of the trees. If my ticket for a comfortable hereafter depended on it I couldn’t. ‘Put me any-

where you like, Lord,' I should have to say, 'but that's a new crime. That's arboricide. You didn't mention it in the Decalogue but I've got it down in mine. And it proves there's more than one unpardonable sin among men.'

"Maybe it's my grandfather coming out in me. Anyway it's as strong as I am. Why, do you know what a tree represents, how slow it grows, what a push and urge it puts into its resurrection every spring and how it goes to sleep so pretty and stands there for all the winds of winter to buffet it and the rain to lash it in the face? And there it is in the spring ready again if you give it half a chance, gnarled maybe and brown and old, but with a bridal bloom no girl could ever equal—not even Annie. It's kind, a fruit tree is, it's beneficent, always offering you something, and even if you neglect it offering you a little still. As if it said, 'I'm poor, but I'll share with you.' Why, the relation between mankind and its fruit trees ought to be a never-ending alliance—protection on our part, generosity, kindness. Because on theirs they're always ready with an answer. Well, that's how I feel about fruit trees, and when I saw them by the hundred sawed two-thirds through and then broken down, split, mangled, murdered, how do you think I felt? And let me stop right here and say I found in a newspaper I got hold of the other day what a German military high joss said about their retreat:

"'Before our new positions runs, like a gigantic ribbon, an empire of death.'

“That describes it better than I could if I went into a day’s talk of mine craters and gaping holes and what had been fruit trees with the life-blood in them standing there, bare, jagged spikes, pointing up to heaven. That idea rather got hold of me as I stared at them. There seemed to be something significant in it. They were pointing up to heaven.

“Well, we moved along, we of the observation party, and we found not only destruction of all the mechanism of life but the dead. Here and there were a few dead Boches. And one man, lying with two others quite safely off on their journey into some other planet, was a slender fellow, face downward, his hand stretched limp toward one of the others as if he had tried to touch him, get some comfort or give it, God knows which. And I knew that hand. I can’t say now whether I actually did know it, the outward form of it, or whether some inside sense told me. But I knew. It was Hugo’s, and I slid off my horse and told the others I’d overtake them, and I turned him over as gently as I could and his eyes opened and met mine—the strangest look, that was, as if he were relieved to see me and yet, too, as if he were too far away to have it count—and he said my name, and that one word that haunts the battlefield like a litany of torture: ‘Water.’ But with it he was gone, slipped away out of his body as if he’d been ready and only waiting for me to give him somehow his release, and I laid him down as easy as I could. Strange isn’t it how we feel they can keep on being hurt, though we know

their bodies are—as they are? And then I remembered I must see if he had anything I could send back to Annie, and as I put out my hand to him again something obliterated me and I'd got the earth behind me, too.

“Now you know how it was, how an apparently dead Boche at my left had come to himself and potted me, and you know of course I wasn't dead because I'm here now. But I did have a narrow squeak of it, as they'd tell you in hospital if they had time to remember also-rans like me. So far as this world goes, I was dead. I had gone out of my body and into some other state of existence, just as sure's you're here in this. I had a sensation of lightness, of rising, and of all my faculties being keener than they'd ever been. I seemed to be thinking of a dozen things at once and with a clearness, a power, that was even in itself a mode of action. Don't you see? I might not have my hands or feet or eyes to work with or a heart to beat, but I was perfectly conscious that I could do things. And I thought of Annie with a sort of regret that yet wasn't sad, even though now she'd lost us both and there was nobody but the road commissioner to stand between her and life—yes, I actually saw the road commissioner as I lay there on the field of France, with his pepper and salt suit and the gold tooth I always suspected him of being proud of—and above every stratum of feeling was the certainty that I'd got to hang on to Hugo till we could sit down and talk it over and somehow arrange things for her.

And though I had that sensation of lightness, I was apparently there on the ground, only we were standing and we faced each other and I was the first to speak.

“‘Well, old chap,’ said I, ‘how goes it?’

“‘And we seemed to shake hands, only I didn’t feel the grip of his; but I knew he was tremendously glad to see me, and his voice sounded perfectly familiar when he answered.

“‘I suppose,’ said he, ‘we’re dead.’

“‘That was it. We were dead. It had been so far from my thoughts as anything I was likely to suffer, that particular day, that I actually hadn’t known it. He began to peer round in exactly the way he used to when we were alive, and I laughed. Being dead wasn’t going to be so bad if we were sufficiently ourselves to chum together in the old way. Though all the time I was conscious of something that tried to draw me away from him or him away from me. That’s a commonplace, you know. I’ve heard lots of chaps speak of it that got knocked out and then had to come back. It was so strong that I felt breathless as I combated it, and gasped once or twice to get my breath, because I’d even thought of a little joke.

“‘‘Evidently we’re to be separated,’ I said. ‘I’m going to heaven. So you can draw your own conclusions.’

“‘How did it look round us? I forgot—I hadn’t told you. Well, it simply didn’t look any way at all, any more than it does at sea when the fogs shut

down and the horn is groaning. And there wasn't any horn, not a sound in that eerie place unless we chose to speak. And Hugo did speak, and with such a relief in his voice that I knew he'd been as lost as I.

"‘The fog is lifting,’ he said.

"It was, or dispersing itself, thinner at first, then in little separate spirals like pipe smoke, and then, with a rush, it went. And we were in the most unbelievable place you ever saw—with your mind's eye, that is—for it was like no other place mapped out or charted. It was a place as big—I can't tell you how big, for it seemed illimitable. And that you must take my word for, because you can't see how we could get the idea of tremendous space when there were so many trees to break it. But they didn't break it. They just gave the impression of more and more miles and more and more trees.

"‘Come,’ said I, ‘we’ve got to get somewhere out of this.’

"I spoke with the more decision because, mind you, I was determined not to leave Hugo, and I was conscious all the time of the force that was trying to pull me away from him.

"‘Come,’ it seemed to say, ‘his way lies here. Yours doesn't. Break off and leave him.’

"And because I had an inward certainty that the phrase about leaving him might have been rounded out ‘leave him to his fate’ I was all the more determined not to go. It was partly because I was fond of him. The old days were pulling at me. And then I was morally bound not to fail Annie. Some-

how or other I'd got to give him back to her, if we weren't both in here for keeps. I wanted Annie myself precisely as much as I ever had, but in that place something—I don't know what it was—fell away from me and I was ready to stand back and let the other man walk over me to his own. If he could: but there was something in the place that put a spell on you and decreed you should walk only its way. And when I said that last I told you, that we'd got to get out, he agreed with me, though I don't know whether he spoke, and we plunged into the undergrowth among the trees in a direction that seemed to lead to a kind of path. The air was green, oozy, damp, not exactly the air you find in tropical forests, but as if there was intention in it. You'll think I'm daffy, but it wasn't as if the trees were luxuriating naturally in that wet medium, but as if it were something they controlled and were breathing it out to choke and slay.

“And when my breath and my heart failed me and I stopped to wipe my dripping face, I looked round me and what I saw, though it ought to have been beautiful to me, was terrifying in the extreme. For they were fruit trees in full bloom. They were low-growing, so that their laced branches made a roof I could have touched by stretching up my arm, and their brown twigs were heavy with crowded petals, pink and white, and with hardly a leaf to break their blended continuity. And the fragrance of them, the heaviness of it that sickened you with its very sweetness and lay in your lungs like a drug!

I looked at Hugo and I saw he was frightened. That is what he must have seen in me, pale fear reflected each to each.

“‘Trees!’ I said. My voice sounded faint and unfamiliar to me. It might have been ‘death’ I said or ‘murder’ or any of those words weighted with an awful inheritance from countless tragedies. (Am I talking rot? Maybe. You see I’ve thought for ever so long how I’d write this out if I could. But I can’t. I can’t. I lived it, once for all. That was my part. Anything I could say would sound like a penny whistle.) And Hugo, in the same kind of voice echoed back ‘Trees!’ and there we stood staring, as if there was no spell we could think of like that same word. And in a minute Hugo looked across me to one side where the light was growing a trifle brighter, and he gave a cry I never shall forget so long as I live. It was like a woman’s scream, and a man’s voice in a woman’s scream is something to remember.

“‘What’s that?’ said he, ‘that over there—’ Then he stopped and cried out again before he went on. ‘It’s like the road from Roye.’

“‘It was then I began to understand, and I cried out at him:

“‘Were you one of the devils that cut down the trees?’

“‘And all the time my eyes, like his, were on that further space where there were no blossoms and no interlacing boughs: only maimed and mangled torsos such as I had seen that day. And then Hugo began

to cry out in an awful abandonment, sobbing, too, as if he were beseeching something—as if he found himself helpless and the most terrific power that could be imagined stood over him with its most terrific weapon, and it was raised to fall. I never before realized what it is to see a man in every last nerve and sinew of him mad with fear. He began to beg, and justify himself all in one.

“‘Why,’ he said, ‘what’s a tree? If it were a man—they’ve all been killing men—the French and English, look at them! they’ve killed *me*. And I’ve killed, too. I know I have. But you don’t punish me for that. You punish me for sawing down a tree or two. I had to, don’t you see? It was orders, and common sense, too. What’s the crime of sawing down a tree?’”

“And I understood. He was in hell, a hell of trees, and I was with him because I wouldn’t let him go. For all the time, mind you, the power that forbade me to stay with him was tugging at me and beating in my ears, ‘Give him up, give him up.’ And I wouldn’t give him up, and gripped tighter on his hand. By this time he had gone to pieces, over his entire body, and fallen to his knees and still I held his hand and tried to drag him up by it. And he did get up and turned about obliquely toward the naked torsos of the ruined wood and took a step miserably and then another and I took mine with him.

“‘I’ve got to go,’ he kept saying, and now he sobbed without any restraint or shame. ‘That’s the way I’ve got to go.’”

“And as we stumbled on in that thick sweet air—oh, a million apple trees in bloom shut up like concentrated poison in a flask couldn’t have been stronger—I understood that the trees were unfriendly to us. That broke my heart. Trees! the patient, generous friend of man—they were unfriendly. I felt as if God Himself had forsaken me. And another delicately exquisite bit of torture piled up on this last. The trees were moving, too. They ran beside us, they pursued us, they waved their branches—it was their own volition, mind you—there was no wind—they outran us and beckoned us on, they pelted us with blooms that hurt like ice-pellets and suffocated like wool. It seemed millions of years that we were running—for we ran fast now, as if we spurned the undergrowth, ran through the air—but never, never could we outrun the racing trees. And one fear in me was stronger than all other fears—would they, somehow, at last speak in some arboreal fashion? Would they charge Hugo with his crime and me for my unfriendliness to them and all my inherited past in staying with him? And finally the maimed victims neared us, as if they might be running to meet us, and Hugo spoke with that small sobbing breath he had:

“‘It is the road from Roye. That’s the way I’ve got to go.’

“How far had he got to go? And where would the road of torment lead him at the last? And now he stopped short and looked at me. In that minute, from that look of his, I knew he loved me, that he

saw what I'd been trying to do. The trees stopped, too. I had a foolish fancy they were giving him an instant's breathing space just for that look, that look of human kindness and sacrifice. And he spoke precisely as he might have spoken in those first days in New Hampshire or in Cambridge, when we sat with a table between us and smoked and rearranged the world.

"'Good-by, old chap,' said he. 'Good-by.'

"'But I'm with you,' I called out to him as if there'd already begun to be widening space between us. 'I won't go.'

"And with a quick pull, as if he'd got to do it that way or not at all, because I'd grip the harder if he did it otherwise, he snatched his hand out of mine, and it was dark before me, and something kind—oh you don't know what beneficent destinies there are till you've been where Hugo and I were—it seemed to lift me and carry me to where there was breath and light.

"And to go back a minute, to the kind destinies. You know the Furies have another name. And I can't help thinking that when they'd got done scourging him through his wilderness of murdered trees, he'd see their other faces and call that name, and they'd answer him and smile."

"And you," said I. "You were in hospital?"

"Yes. I was in hospital. And you tell Annie I saw Hugo, saw him die, quickly, without pain, and that—yes, you say it!—that he's safe."

THE MAN AND THE MILITANT

ON an early June morning in London, Grace Harwich stood by a pillar box at the West End. She had dropped in an enclosure, and she now put out her hand again to the slit. This time it was for another envelope, somewhat thickish and blue-gray, and she tucked the corner in with a delicate concern that might have led you to think she was an awkward person aware of her disabilities and patiently trying to get the best of them. You would have said: "There is a most charming young lady, evidently, from her dress and her carriage, an American, mailing her letters home."

But Gilbert Mills, the young man in the limousine that had been trailing her and now as softly stopped, was keeping an eye on the envelope, not in any cursory way, but as if it held the news he feared or longed for. He stepped out of the car, took one stride that brought him to her elbow before she had time to do more than wince, and his hand fell on her wrist.

"You little sneak!" said he.

Grace looked at him in a perfect silence. She had not been quick enough to poke the incriminating oblong in, and the hand upon her wrist had withdrawn it from the box. Unconsciously her thumb and finger grasped it tighter, and a viscid fluid

trailed out of the envelope and made a little meandering rivulet on the front of her gray dress, dripping thence to her perfect shoe. She had trained rigorously for this adventure, and the first article of her code had been that she must never scream. So she stood looking, with a grave and questioning composure, out of violet-blue eyes, at Gilbert who, having drawn his brows together and set his square jaw as if he meant to subjugate by every masculine device of facial power, also looked at her. He was an American,—her own countryman,—and she knew he loved her so completely that she made no doubt of his unfailing concurrence in her aims. As she had once expressed it to him, he really did see things her way. Then she had elaborated somewhat. For she knew, as he did, that he wasn't merely, in an acquiescence to her charm or an involuntary sex-homage for the purpose of making it his own, seeing her way. They actually did look upon present life and the larger future with the same demands. They were safe in knowing they were to be man and wife, although that finished conclusion in the mind of each had not yet been shared. Gilbert had only just come into his luck, and until he had he would not ask, and Grace had waited with the utmost tranquillity, being only a little over twenty and having adventurous things to occupy her.

Gilbert still held her wrist and answered the clear interrogation of her eyes with that savage and dominating stare. But it did not dominate. She merely inquired, in a conversational tone:

"What are you grabbing me for?"

"What," said Gilbert, "are you doing to the inside of that pillar box?"

A faint smile lifted the corners of her mouth. It was the lightest little signal from the woman in her to the man in him, and Gilbert saw it and approved.

"Why, you know," said she. "The same thing we've done before."

"I knew They'd been doing it," said he, with a comprehensive jerk of the head, meant to indicate the entire female contingent of the British empire. "But what have you got to do with it?"

Her unflinching eyes held obvious reproach.

"Why, Gil," said she, "what did Lafayette have to do with it when he came over to us and fought our battles?"

Gilbert lifted one foot and set it down with the emphasis of a stamp. That was all he could do as a natural expression of feeling, because he had begun to remember his own plan of campaign. The sight of an American girl playing rough house with an English pillar box had put it temporarily out of his head, and now he called upon himself to be not so much man as woman in guile and firmness fit to cope with the young desperado before him. She raised her brows with a look at once mandatory and pleading.

"You're holding my wrist awfully tight," said she. But he didn't loose it.

"Grace," said he, "I've got a message for you."

"For me? From uncle? Oh, piffle! I sha'n't go home. Auntie cabled the minute she found Mrs.

Irvington had got to leave me unchaperoned. But I wouldn't go. Of course I wouldn't. Do you think I'm likely to quit my English sisters in bondage when I could—"

"When you could put molasses—or what is the infernal stuff?—on your skirt? Well, whatever it is, so long as you could stick up love letters and checks and make butter-slides down Asquith's stairs and hide gooseberry tarts in his bed and play the devil generally?"

He had, since he left the University at least, been leaning on the well-founded conviction that he was a clever young man, as clever as need be, even at this time of competitive scrambling and sophomoric recipes for the way it is "done"; but now he bit his lip in a savage self-reproach. He was not being nearly so clever as he had intended. Grace had the advantage of having taken her limitations into account and steadily allowing for them. He hadn't realized he had any limitations at all.

"But Gil," said she with the same mild dignity, though a slight twitching of the brow was meant to remind him that her wrist did indeed hurt her increasingly, "we are simply convincing the nation that we are a power in it."

"What's the matter with staying at home and convincing your own nation?" said Gilbert. "I don't mean by butter-slides and stealing knockers—"

"The need is greater here," she said gravely. "You really do hurt me very much."

Somehow now it seemed as if the hurt referred not

only to the appealing wrist but to the discovery that he did not see things as she did. She seemed to break out, at one uncalculated bound, from the enclosure of her determined action.

"O Gil," said she meltingly, "I thought you were one of us."

And he was melted, chiefly because he saw this was not artifice. She was indeed hurt to the soul to suspect a flaw in the oneness of their aims.

"I am," said he. "If you mean votes for women, of course I'm with you. Do you suppose I'd go back on mother and grandmother? to say nothing of you and the trend of things. Didn't I march in that infernal procession, and didn't I help you put up balloons on Palm Beach? Well, I should say! I've disgraced myself plenty, to prove it."

"Thank you, Gil," said she faintly. "You've an awful grip, haven't you? Is that Treherne in the car?"

She was indicating the leather-colored chauffeur who sat with his gaze set discreetly forward, waiting in a perfect stolidity, yet still, even to the casual gaze, with an air of tense readiness, as if he needed only the first syllable of the word to "let her out" and cover the distance from Land's End to John o' Groat's. The still presence of Treherne and the certainty of his readiness brought Gilbert with a shock to a recognition of the way he was fumbling his own job. He summoned to his face a beautiful smile. He did it with the feeling of signaling wildly for reinforcements, and was grateful to his muscles when they answered him.

"Grace," said he, "I'm all there. I'm simply glad to see you. It's made me daffy. Had to take it out in kidding you. Now I'm in dead earnest. I've got a message for you."

"Auntie?" she asked, now with a faint concern. "Nothing's happened?"

"No, not auntie. I've had a conference with two of your leaders. Hang it, Grace! I'm not going to mention names, even at this hour, in the open street. Jump into the car and we'll tool round a little and I'll tell you about it there."

"Surely," said she; and then he did open his hand and free the ill-used wrist. She looked down at it ruefully and gave it a rub with the other hand. But she did not intermit her delicate grasp of the envelope.

"Here," said Gilbert, "give me that." He plucked it from her, did it up in the morning paper Treherne respectfully proffered, and tossed it into the car. "Let the devilish thing leak there all it wants to."

Grace put her foot, in its slightly sticky shoe, in after it, and gave her pretty hop of pleasurable excitement to the seat. Gilbert knew that spring. It always meant, "We're off," and caught him in the throat because it seemed to indicate a longer journey to the peal of bells. They were seated now, and the car, as if Treherne had whispered the one magic word, shot forward, gliding on glass.

"He knows," said Gilbert. He had taken out his handkerchief and was rubbing at her skirt in a frown-

ing care. "Look what you've done to your pretty dress!"

She laughed, a little burst of pleasure like the top-most drops of a fountain where they are colored by the sun.

"Now tell," she said. "You went to headquarters here. What for? You had my address."

"I went for news," said Gilbert. "Don't forget I've got my own paper now. I really intended to ask for a set of articles on the situation, and I wanted a prominent person to do them. And then, because I was an American, she spoke of other Americans, and you especially."

"Gil! What did she say?"

"Why, there's but one thing she could say. She thought your Votes-for-Women shower in Saint Paul's an admirable *coup*."

"Yes," said Grace modestly, "it was rather well managed, I think myself."

She sat forward in her seat and gazed at the road running so hard to meet them. Gilbert knew that look of high excitement. She was happy, and Treherne was speeding. For a time she had not noticed that, but now the motion madness touched her brain, and she turned to Gilbert. There was no apprehension in her face: merely wonder.

"Well," said she, "we're going some."

Gilbert apparently didn't hear.

"So she asked me," he continued, "if I thought you were game for a big job."

"She did? Oh, that's tremendous! That's the

most amazing compliment I ever had in all my life."

Gilbert remembered a few he had handed her, colossal pieces of sterling value, he had thought, and swallowed.

"She asked me," he continued in a rush, "if a certain person—we'll mention no names—"

"But we could," said she, wide-eyed, "here in the car. Treherne won't listen."

"It's a good precaution," said Gilbert firmly, "to mention no names anywhere, even if you're alone at midday on an open prairie. It's an excellent habit. It gets you into the way of being all there."

"You're right," said she. "Go on."

"She asked me if a certain person now in France in hiding—"

"Oh!" screamed Grace. "Is she there?"

Gilbert nodded.

"If that person decided to charter a boat and come over and land in Cornwall—"

"Like Boney!" Her eyes ran over with wild light. She looked like youth and hope incarnate on its brave adventure. "Like the invading Kaiser. But she can't land except incog. She can't. There are a thousand eyes out, and a million regulations got up for German Willie. They'd spot her in an instant."

"That's the point," said Gilbert. "She's not going to be spotted. She's coming to a little Cornish port, to lie off the shore and signal. And we're going out at midnight, you and I and Treherne, in a sail-

boat, and bring her in. And the news will filter round through Cornwall—Treherne sees to that—and the Cornish women are all primed to rally to the standard, and by George! you'll break every window in Cornwall."

Grace had turned upon him, her face a bright mask of eager wonder.

"I never heard of anything so absolutely magnificent in all my life," she said. "But why does she take me?"

"Because the whole adventure is to be made as spectacular as possible. Think how the women of Paris marched to Versailles. Wouldn't it have been still more dramatic then if they had had a leader in a woman of another country—a woman who simply had to come into it because their wrongs were so unspeakable? Same reason that our fugitive comes over and lands in a little boat when she might disguise herself and go to any port. The adventure! Consider the adventure! That delicate woman dares to land at midnight, like smuggled goods, and an American girl meets her and leads the forces on to Victory."

Grace threaded her hands together in her lap and strained them while the knuckles blanched. She was ecstatically serious now, like a sacrificial victim who believes in the gods that slaughter him. And Treherne was speeding. Gilbert pulled out his letter case and drew a paper from it.

"Here," said he, "read your orders. Her signature!"

Grace took the paper and spread it before her dazzled eyes. It was laconic, to the extent of five terse lines, and it was signed by the name of her loved leader. She reverently folded it.

"Yes," she said, "it's her signature. But Gil, how fast we're going!"

"Oh, yes," said Gilbert. His tone conveyed a hollow nonchalance. "We're outside London. In fact, we're on the road to Guilford. That's a part of it." She had accepted his authority, and that, while it moved him warmly, brought also its prick of helpless self-reproach. "Yes," said he, "we're on the road to Cornwall."

Grace rose in her seat with the surprise of it, but the motion, gliding as it was, threw her back again. It was not so much, indeed, the motion, as the swift vision of the road running to meet her and being extinguished as it came. "Sit still," the road seemed to say. "You and I are in the hands of a greater than we. It is my lot to run to you and be cast behind; it is yours to leave me lying there like a discarded ribbon." Then, sitting, she did cry out:

"I can't go to Cornwall like this."

"Not when you've got your marching orders?" inquired Gilbert sternly. "What kind of soldiers are you women anyway?"

She plucked up a doubting spirit.

"I've got to have some clothes."

"Your clothes are all right. I saw Marie this morning and she gave me a suitcase. It's behind there."

"My Marie?"

"Your maid."

"While I was out?"

"While you were putting molasses in the pillar box."

"But why not have consulted me?"

"You weren't there, I tell you. You were gluing up the correspondence of the British Empire and the world."

"Why not have telephoned in advance?"

"Now see here, Grace," said Gilbert, "if you're going to take orders, you can't question 'em. You're talking too much. She—you know whom I mean—"

Grace nodded. It was her loved leader.

"She has given me a perfectly clear plan of action. I may not agree with it. I may not see why the deuce she should be so much of a martinet."

"Oh, I see," said Grace. Her loyalty had been woven without the break of a thread. "It has to be. Think of the thousands she's in command of. I see perfectly."

"Very well then." He blinked his eyes two or three times, as if the relief of that were almost too unexpected to be borne. "Then I've only to tell you that I'm carrying out instructions to the letter. You and I are to drive like the devil to Penreath."

"Why," said Grace, "that's where your cottage is."

"Yes. I haven't been there this summer, but it's in order waiting for us."

"And wasn't it Penreath where you got Treherne?"

"Yes. Treherne's sister is in the cottage now,

She'll give us plain food and act as your maid in a way while you're there."

"Is she," Grace asked with a pretty simplicity that challenged him to be as direct with her, "is she an older woman—a widow or anything?"

"No," said Gilbert, with robust imperviousness. "No. Wenna's never been married. She's about nineteen."

"But Gil," said she, "we can't stay there together, you and I, with Treherne and that girl. Auntie'd raise the roof."

"Great Cæsar!" said Gilbert, now meeting her glance with an impact of amazement equal to her own, "you don't mean to tell me you can stick up letter-boxes and heckle the Prime Minister of England and then cringe before the out-worn conventions of the past?"

Gilbert sat the straighter after he had said that. He thought it rather good. And so did she.

"I'm sorry," she owned humbly. "I was only thinking of auntie."

"I wonder if Lafayette thought of auntie when he set sail for America?" inquired Gilbert caustically; and she owned that she supposed not.

Now that she fairly knew her road and the adventure unrolled itself, a responsive excitement took possession of her. She sat straight and sniffed the air. Gilbert thought she sat as buoyantly as if she might spurn the flying car and take to wings. He had never loved his car so well, valiant dear thing without fault or flaw, as if it had pledged itself to that

day's run. Yet throughout he felt he was denying Grace the pleasures of the road, delights her eyes besought him for. As they slipped through Winchester, she recalled to him that other summer when he and she, bulwarked by auntie, had eaten strawberries in the Itchin meadows; but though she knew his mind was one with hers, he would not stop. In the middle of the day they ate delicious things from the hamper, and Treherne, accepting his sandwiches as if they were cartridges for another round, stoked himself hurriedly and drove on. Grace had caught the infection of it now. The madness of speed ran in her nerves.

She hardly spoke, and when the air changed to the softness off the moors and then the tang of salt, she breathed it in as if to hearten her for the predestined act. She looked very serious and, to Gilbert, beautiful. She had taken off her hat, and her thick light hair lay disordered above her brows. Through the aura of the coming quest she was more the woman than the girl. This grave reflectiveness, new in her face, was maternal even, and brought deep thoughts to birth in him. When the coolness of the afternoon came on, he put a fur coat round her, and she received it with a smile. She had done, he saw, with questioning. She had accepted her appointed task, and with it the inevitable mystery.

It was damp and dark when they ran along Cornish lanes and stopped at a cottage set by itself in space. The windows were alight, and Wenna, sweet as pink thrift, stood in the door, shading a candle with a

careful hand. Grace, under the braided spell of air and speed and mystery, smiled at the girl as if they had been old friends.

"O Wenna," she said drowsily, out of the narcotism of that windy rush, "just hear the sea!"

Then Wenna brought food to a dim fragrant chamber, and Grace ate and hurried into the white bed by the latticed window to the east.

She slept sweetly, and when she woke late in the morning, lay for a time and loved the air of Cornwall on her cheek. The cottage awoke presently to the sound of Wenna, who brought salt water, and Grace, uprising, knotted her long hair and asked for a secluded pool where she could dip. Wenna decisively said no. There was no pool, and Mr. Mills had sent up this bucket quite freshly filled by himself, for a sponge. He was waiting breakfast in the garden. Grace made a quick toilet and at the end looked in the glass, approving. Here was rich color and noble line. She looked as fit and splendid as she felt. Her loved leader had done well to summon her. Whatever the task demanded, she had for it the mad devotion, the muscle and the nerve. Just here she went to the window, and found that although the air came in buoyantly, it was through latticed iron. The glazed window opened inward. The diamonds were firm. She shook them—for no reason—and then smiled. She was balking, it seemed, at the very thought of bars.

In the room below—a room all sweet Cornish air through iron-latticed panes—Wenna was waiting.

"This way, miss," said Wenna.

She indicated an open door, and through this Grace walked into a garden where Gilbert met her. She looked at him and found him, with that vital throb of pleasure in him responsive to her own imperious youth, as fit and splendid as the girl that met her from the glass. Then she looked at the garden. This was a little paradise shut in by a high brick wall; it had flagged walks through bright luxuriance, and in a shady corner a round table with the breakfast things. Grace opened her mouth to commend it all, but she said, out of a desultory wonder at the bottom of her mind:

"Gil, aren't your windows queer?"

"Queer? They're all right."

"They're barred. The pattern's in diamonds, but they're perfectly tight. Burglar-proof—is that it?"

"Oh," said Gilbert, "so they are. We'll take a look at 'em, after breakfast, when we're fortified."

Wenna came then with a tray, and Treherne with another. It was an admirable breakfast, suited to hungry youth. When it was over, Grace, exhilarated by the day, the comfort of a well-used body, and the man's enhancing presence, looked at him across the table and smiled in a way to indicate her readiness.

"Now," said she.

Gilbert looked suddenly haggard and very grave. He folded his napkin seriously, the motion of one gaining time, and dumped it, as if it represented a conclusion.

"After they take these things," he said. He seemed to crave that slight delay.

Treherne presently cleared the table, and then Gilbert, as if he had been waiting only to lean his arm upon it, began, tapping slightly with his fingers:

"I've been lying to you."

Now for a long minute there was nothing but the rote of the sea and the delicate insistence of the breeze, less a whisper than a touch. Grace stared at him.

"That note of instructions," he said. "It wasn't from her at all."

"Not from her?"

"No."

"Her name was signed."

"I signed it."

"You—forged her name?"

"Yes," said Gilbert. He was answering her questions in a leaden quiet, as if they were what he had expected, in some form, and he had to go through with the heavy task.

"Gil," said she, "will you explain yourself."

"Oh, yes," said he at once. "Shall I do it as it comes, or will you ask me questions?"

"I haven't any questions," she said, as grave as he. "I'm too puzzled."

"It goes back," he said, "to what you've been doing here in England. I've kept pretty accurate track of you ever since you wrote me you were a militant. When I couldn't stand it any longer, I came over. And here I am."

She looked really alarmed now. A spark had come into her eyes, and her anxious face besought him.

"Gil," she said, "don't tell me you've gone back on suffrage."

"Oh, no," said he, "I couldn't. I should if I were an Englishman, of course; that is, I should be mighty near it. But for our women—oh, no, I've not changed."

"Then what is it? Is it because you don't like me to do things that are—conspicuous?"

Gilbert looked up at her now, brightening in a whimsical response.

"You've always been conspicuous, dear," he said. "There's nothing else visible when you're round. But now you've sunk into the criminal class, you see, the conspicuousness isn't because you're so charming. It's because you're—conspicuous."

"Gilbert," said she, "do you want to know what I think? You're crazy."

"No," said he, "I'm not. I'm simply worried."

"About me?"

"All of you. You chiefly, of course, because I thought I was going to marry you."

"Well, but—" She stopped so short on the word that he knew she was about to add, "Aren't you?" and that he could not answer.

"You're discouraging me frightfully," he said, "all of you. Don't you see what you're proving? You've reverted. You've gone back to the oldest type of all, the woman that cries until she gets it,

that won't let any peace settle on the house until she is given her way. The individual hysteria of the spoiled child has culminated in the hysteria of a class. That type used to say to its husband or its lover, 'I'll cry all night if you don't back down.' That's what you're saying in concert to the English nation."

"Gilbert," said she, "do you mean to tell me you don't think it's of infinite importance for us to have the vote?"

Gilbert answered wearily.

"I think it's of infinite importance for you to be civilized enough to deserve the vote and then to have it. But I shouldn't admit any woman to a finger in the pie who would go out and stick up letter-boxes and call it a Holy War. I should be afraid to. As soon as she doesn't get her measures passed, what is she going to do? She's going to say, 'Sisters, here's another call to smash things. Come on.'"

"It's war. Don't you know it's war?"

"Oh, no, it isn't," said Gilbert dolefully. "I've tried to make myself think so, but I can't. War is training yourself to be the best man and going out and fighting like a man. It isn't sneaking round destroying private property."

"But we let ourselves be caught." Her cheeks were scarlet now. He glanced up at her and thought he would not willingly do it again. She seemed literally to blaze. He might take fire himself at her fine passion. "We glory in getting caught."

"Yes," he said, "and then you don't take your

punishment like men. You stop eating and call it sport."

"Am I to be shut up here in Penreath?" she inquired, in a tone of ominous composure.

"For a while."

"Is that why the windows are barred?"

"Yes. That's why."

"Is that why you've built a brick wall round the garden? I notice the bricks are new."

"Yes. That's why."

"Have Wenna and her brother been corrupted?"

"They won't help you."

"How long is this state of things to last?"

"Until we have come to terms."

"Until you have made me promise things?"

"Until we mutually decide on your future course, and what our relations are to be."

She was silent. He did not look at her, but he was aware that she was deliberating on her next move, as a captive might study a long time on the quick turn that should free her wrists.

"What are your terms?" she inquired finally, in a perfectly unmoved voice. He saw she had called upon her emergency training, and he admired her for the speed and coolness of her tactics.

"What I should like to do," he said, in an attempt at similar composure, "is to have you marry me, after whatever formality of residence and special license they require, and sail with me for home."

"Oh!" Her voice took on something of an edge here, and he did wince. "I fancied from some-

thing you said, a minute ago, that I'd ceased to be eligible."

"Of course," said he, avoiding the edge and feeling a droll relief that it really had not cut him badly, "that would be after we had come to terms. You would have agreed with me that the only road to eligibility for marriage to any man would be through returning to the old code of private honor."

"Gil," she flashed, with a touch of temper very pretty and beguiling, "you must have been a long time getting this up. You're talking like a book."

If he knew himself caught, he did not show it.

"You see," he continued, "I've some tremendously keen ideas on marriage. You know what they are. And I shouldn't marry a woman who was a criminal, or who could be incited by even the most understandable form of hysteria to criminal acts."

She got up and made him a low courtesy. Wenna, watching incidentally while she did her kitchen work, almost broke a dish.

"I shall try," said Grace, "to bear my rejection with fortitude."

"Don't be a silly. Sit down, dear."

She obeyed him because she was too curious to go. Besides, she liked it. The instinct of battle ran thrillingly through her, and the question where it was to end was nothing to the charm of its still continuing.

"If we were savages on an island," said Gilbert, "I don't suppose I should mind your indulging your

instincts once in a while. I might indulge my own and hit you over the head with a cocoanut. But in Salem! I couldn't live in Salem with a wife out of the aboriginal past. I couldn't practice law knowing I might go home any noon and find her and the cook and the housemaid all breaking the furniture together."

"Don't chaff," she said, frowning. "We are talking about serious matters."

"I mean it," said Gilbert. "If you cut down the cook's wages, the cook, if she's got a saltspoon of logic in her nut, will hack your furniture. For she'll remember you were the celebrated Lafayette Grace who, in the year of our Lord 1913, hacked into England. And if I don't vote as my wife wants me to, my militant wife will cut up my cravats and dint my razors and starve herself. I'm not being funny, Grace. I mean it. You are the only girl in the world for me. I'd rather marry you than own a football team. But unless you get back your sense of honor, I'm afraid to."

While the warmest of his declarations had caressed her she had leaned toward him, lips apart, eyes misty, ingenuously expectant. But he did not look at her. She collected herself and spoke reflectively.

"Sense of honor! Who lied to me, to trick me into coming here?"

"Oh, I did," he said. "Deliberately. You're outside the line, you know. You've been sneaking. I had to sneak to catch you."

She deliberated a moment. Then,—

"You don't like our methods," she said.

"I utterly repudiate them," said he, "just as I repudiate the noble sabotage of the working-man. You're all of a piece."

"Your father was a soldier, Gil," she softly reminded him. "You wouldn't be, would you? Don't believe in war?"

"By George, I do," he said. "There's something mighty fine in a man's saying 'I believe in this thing so much I'll die for it.' But that's not putting marmalade in Asquith's boots."

"Do you believe in strikes?"

"Once in a dog's age."

"Very well. The nature of the cause determines the form of strike. Now I give you notice that, from this minute, I'm going on strike."

"Hunger?"

"Yes."

"I foresaw that. So I ordered a good breakfast. It was all the start I could give you."

Remembering three eggs apiece, she frowned.

"And," he continued, "I'm forced to tell you again that the woman who does that is no man. Still, I supposed you'd do it. I'd thought it out. And I thought I'd fast as long as you did."

"Ah!" she breathed. She liked the clash of wills.

"That was my first thought. Then I said to myself, 'I won't be such an ass. I'll serve three excellent meals a day. If she refuses to eat them, it's at her own risk.'"

She rose.

"May I ask again," she said, with some ceremony, "how long I am to be detained here?"

He hesitated. At length, "I can't go into that," he said.

She knitted her brows and studied him. "There's something behind this," she avowed.

"There is," he lightly owned. "The whole militant movement."

"You've found out!" she cried, so stridently that Wenna ran again to look.

"Yes," said he gravely, "I've found out."

"You know what is going to be done within the week."

"Yes, I know."

"And you've told."

"No, I haven't told—yet. But by God! you're not going to be in it."

She was breathing hard.

"Gil," she said, "what would make you let me go?"

He looked up at her. She saw, with a shock of terror lest it was not to concern her any more, that his face, in its stern sincerity, was beautiful.

"Your word of honor," he said. "I'd still take it in spite of the things you've done. Your word of honor that you'll stop short—and fight fair."

"Have men," she challenged him passionately, "have men fought fair?"

"Not often."

"Look at the Great Powers when they want an inch of land. Do they fight fair?"

"No. But you, Grace—you fight fair. I'm

with you. I'll help you fight. You'd have cut me when I came on here for the games that time, if I'd sneaked it by a hair. Why, girl, you haven't forgotten 'the game'?"

Their eyes were encountering in a scrutiny made of passionate memory and dying hope.

"Give me your word," he pleaded.

Then there was another pause while they felt the breeze and heard the sea, and both weighed to the full the poignant cruelty of the sunlit day that has not a tear to drop for youth and love in ruins.

"I can't, Gil," she said; but in mercy to them both she said it gently. She walked into the house and up to her own room, and when Wenna tapped there at luncheon time, the door was locked.

The siege lasted three days. To the four in the cottage, though they could exchange no words about it, it was man's siege of woman's heart. Wenna, as if she suffered not only for the moment and these two lovers, but for her whole sex, tragically paled. Three times a day she carried up food prepared with an excess of daintiness, the trays even, at length, decked with flowers; this might have had a sacrificial look though Wenna meant the flowers also to implore. She also appeared at odd moments with tea. Everybody, Wenna thought, had to have a cup of tea. It was the universal fluid.

At the end of the third day she found the door ajar, and though there was no answer to her knock, went in. The room was in beautiful order; Grace was refusing service in the house of her enemies, and she

sat by the window, her arms outstretched on the arms of the chair, her hands hanging in pale beauty. Wenna ran, dropped at her feet and cried. But though Grace did not notice her except by a touch of the white fingers on her pretty hair, it was not from any coldness. She was thinking her own thoughts, and Wenna was no more than a mote in that big sea.

The outer beauty of the days had been unbearable, taken with the ache of her own heart. Even the scent from the kind garden sickened her. Down there striding through its bloom or even at the stair foot, listening day and night in anguish equal to her own, was her lover, made by the strange sad chance of time her enemy. The creature who longed to fight for her was warring against her. The being she should foster, she was denying the comfort of her breast. The immemorial alliance of the two who needed each other so inexorably had been turned into warfare, by the age-long ignorance of both, and the man was driving the woman into the wilderness, and the woman's milk was poisoning the men-children it should nourish.

For a time she blamed him in his own person. Then, as hunger clarified the inner workshop of her brain, and her soul seemed to rise and float above the body and look understandingly upon its trials, she thought of him tenderly as condemned to suffer with her in the rush of time. They were no longer light-hearted man and maid meeting in the rose-garden of their pure desire. Her life seemed to her now but the breath blown out of the trumpets of

revolt. His walled garden had turned into a symbol. Outside it, like a sea girdling her paradise, she seemed to hear the clamoring cry of women—the hunted, the unshielded—condemned to cry in dissonance without her own voice to make it harmony. She loved him, the “young man in his beauty,” but he was no longer Gilbert Mills alone: he was child of the traditions that had made revolt inevitable. What room was there on this “darkling plain” where “ignorant armies clash by night” for the bride bower and the vows of cherishing according to what she called a specious ritual?

Yet so gently did she think of him that when she heard his voice at her door, that late twilight, she could answer.

“Grace,” he said, “will you listen?”

“Yes,” she said. “I’m listening.”

“You’ve forced my hand. This can’t go on.”

“Yes, it can. I’m up to it.”

“The doors are open. You can go. I’ve given Wenna a rigid schedule for your food. You’ll abide by it, won’t you? Nothing else till you’re in shape.”

“That was good of you. Yes, I believe it upsets you to eat after—”

She paused. She wanted to save him the crude sound of things. Still it seemed to her that this wasn’t Gil starving her: only the cruelty of time that had starved women in so many ways,—starved them into hysteria if Gil were right. Now they were no longer wives and maidens. They were Judiths; they were Bacchæ on the mountain drinking blood.

"Treherne will be ready," he continued, "to take you up to London in the car."

"Shall you come, too?" The question leaped from her.

"I hadn't meant to. I thought you'd rather not. I wish you'd let me—to make sure you're all right."

"I shall be all right." She heard Wenna on the stairs, bringing, she knew, a spoonful of food for which appetite had gone. "But I think you'd better come."

This she said to give him less anxiety over her state, and he thanked her humbly. Wenna slipped in with her spoon and cup. Wenna was crying in a low-spirited way as if she had cried for days and was tired of it. But Grace took the liquid like medicine, and then called again to the man outside the door.

"Gil!"

"Yes, I'm here."

"Have you done it?"

"Yes."

"You've betrayed us?"

"I've given you away."

"The whole plan, Gil, the whole big plan?"

"Absolutely."

"Then it hasn't happened?"

"No. I've saved you from that, at least."

She got on her feet.

"Tell Treherne," she said, "to be ready in half an hour. I'm going to London."

"Grace, you can't do anything. It never can

happen now, I tell you, never to the end of time. There'll be a thousand pairs of eyes on it, all watching—till you and I are dead and the world is sane again."

"It isn't that," she said. She was trembling, and her teeth chattered. "But you've done it, Gil—and I'm glad it's done, too. I loved it. I couldn't bear to have it destroyed. But somehow because you've done it I can't stay here in your house and eat your food. Wenna, get my coat and tell Treherne."

And after all, she let him go with her, and through the moonlit night, past the unheard nightingale in copses their car ran by, they sat in deep love of each other and a sick distrust, and drove to London. He left her at her door in the leaden dawn. She looked like the spirit of it, her soft cheeks grayed.

"Good-by, Wenna," she said. "Good-by, Treherne." She turned to Gilbert, "Good-by. You'll be sailing soon."

"Yes," he said, "as soon as I know you're fit again. Won't you—" He had her hand now and drew her a pace away from the two sad Cornish servitors who seemed to have shut themselves into their reserve. "Grace, won't you come with me? Come home."

"Last call?" she asked, in a loving mockery of him. She smiled, a little wry, old smile. "No, Gil. Give my love to Salem."

A CITIZEN AND HIS WIFE

It was a pleasantry among an informal set of us in the studios that Anne Ritchie, after withstanding our individual fascinations from a piquing yet affectionate coolness, had been, in the twinkling of an eye, bewitched by a cosmopolitan. His name, he said—and none of us thought of doubting it—was Louis Fieldman. He had appeared in our laxly hospitable circle, introduced by somebody, we soon forgot who, and was accepted, wholly on account of his personal charm, persuasive enough to lay the usual precautionary hesitations to rest. He was tall, blond, keen-eyed, and yet, subtly, like an implication of the real self he could show if there weren't decorous inhibitions, with a manner some one called tender. She was well jeered at for saying it, but doggedly held to her point, and though nobody accepted the word for working use, it was inwardly felt to be the right one. He was indeed a charmer, well equipped. He knew folklore, legends, the lyric beauties of old countries, though he spoke, he said at once, no tongue but English. He seemed to have no occupation, but indifferently accounted for it. He was, he said, "a correspondent, of sorts," and was lying off a bit. He was tired of the same old game and the indifferent rewards. By and by there

would be a war or something, and he should pitch in again. All these hazy excursions about the edges of main fact would have contented us; but we saw Anne Ritchie was in love with him. Then we wanted to know the definite and absolutely worldly equivalent of our gentleman. How much would he weigh in honor and in cash? It was the custom to be in love with Anne. I was not, because I was too old for anything but a spiritual uncleship. We recognized that between us, and it enabled her to like me "good and hard," she said, without being misunderstood or held to promissory notes, and it gave me some protective rights over her, though as yet I had had no occasion to use them.

Anne was the darling of the studios, entirely without conscious charm but shedding the fragrance of an exquisite gentleness at every breath. I doubt whether she was beautiful; yet they were all forever wanting to paint her: a slender gracefulness, a healthy pallor, a moonlight wistfulness from haunting eyes. Anne was the most normal woman I ever knew, the rhythm of her loveliness actually the pulse of perfect health; but her uncommon look of appeal, her haunting suggestiveness of beauties beyond sense, had the power to rouse all kinds of dormant worship in all degrees of men. From her first meeting with Fieldman, I saw her turn to him with an inevitableness that was like nothing but implicit obedience. He saw it, too, and, with a mastery of himself that was extraordinary, seemed not to recognize it. But he charmed her more and more. He did small,

seemingly involuntary, services for her; he sang songs of invitation to love; he did enchanting things, and she was enchanted.

One night there was a circle about the open fire in Ben Moody's studio. They were burning laurel, leaf by leaf, an accumulation dried for such idle ceremonial, and as it spent its hoarded beauty in sparks they sang idling verse or tossed about reverie from lip to lip. Fieldman was at an angle where Anne could see him perfectly with the firelight on his ruddy and gold comeliness, and she leaned back a little behind Moody's great shoulders, to watch luxuriously from the shadow. I got up, complaining of the heat, but really because I couldn't bear her rapt worship, and made my way back to a corner, and there Jane Wall joined me. Jane was fully my own age, a gaunt, gray-haired creature whose starved youth ought to have been spent in painting, and who lived now in an ecstasy of content before the vestibule of the art she would never approach more nearly. She had drawn up a little chair and rested her elbow on the arm of the big carved one I sulked in. It brought her within whispering distance, and she did whisper acidly:

"Who is he?"

I made no pretense of needing a more particular designation.

"He says," I pronounced bitterly in my return whisper, "he is a cosmopolitan."

"That's not enough," returned she, "for a man Anne looks at like that."

"Oh, what's the odds?" I put in. "He doesn't look at her."

Yet I knew every guarded silence of his was a hypnotic appeal. It said: "I am not suing, but here are my stronghold and my garden. Do they please? do they tempt?"

"His not looking is the most insidious courting I've seen," said she. "You know it is. It's not because he cares so little. It's because he means so much. He's sitting there letting her steal nearer and nearer, out of a half-frightened fascination. When she's near enough he'll nab her."

"Don't," I jerked out. "You're a horrible old Cassandra."

"No, I'm not," said she. And again: "You know it. But before he nabs her we're going to find out things about him and understand precisely who's nabbing her. Listen to that."

Jack Bretton, who, at odd moments when the world shone very bright about him, called himself Jacques le Bret, was telling a story in his facile French. It might as well have been told in English, but it gave him a chance for a rapid flourish of idiom. The story was sufficiently neat, and everybody laughed with the idle satisfaction of having given him what he fondly desired and being allowed now to return to English. My terrible Jane leaned forward, her gray head silhouetted against the firelight leaping higher now as it devoured a garland.

"Mr. Fieldman," said she, "why don't you laugh?"

He turned his face toward us and said, with a grave courtesy:

"I am so sorry, but I don't understand French."

"Ah," said the merciless Jane, "but you understand Russian?"

"No," said he, still with the same gentle gravity: "nothing but English."

"Ah! German?"

"No, nothing but English."

"How can you be a foreign correspondent?" she persisted with such an evident intention of worrying him that several heads took an alerter pose, and Anne turned square round upon her. "I can't imagine a correspondent's being of any use if he has no languages."

"It is a great handicap," agreed Fieldman politely. "But—" he shrugged his shoulders and spoke rather ruefully—"I do what I can."

"Sing," some one proposed. Actual sparring was frowned on in the studios. "Sword Song."

So, idly and also, in some quarters, vehemently, they broke into the clamorous:

Ferrara made and fashioned me,
In Cordova in Spain.

Fieldman listened with a pleased attention. It was repeated, for when they had once begun singing "Ferrara" they were likely to continue from heroic impetus, and with the second repetition he threw in his big baritone, and Anne, with a little shiver of delight, put her hand over her eyes. She was withdrawing into her own intimate solitudes to be the

nearer him. But when that song was exhausted and there was a silence that promised to continue briefly, Jane, was at him again.

"Mr. Fieldman," said she, "are you an American?"

"Yes," he replied at once, with a gentleness somewhat tinged with compassion for her. It seemed bent on concealing even from her the degree of her own crudity. "I am an American citizen."

"Born here?"

"No, Miss Wall. I was born at sea."

A murmur, hardly a breath, ran over the circle. It sounded like pity for a child born at sea; but it was really extreme ruth over a citizen of any country who had fallen under the inquisition of Jane Wall.

"Your father and mother were Americans?" she stated, with an implication of doubt so strongly subtle that I admired and wondered how she had managed it.

"No," said he, "they were not Americans. It is I who am American—a naturalized American citizen."

Here I laid a hand on the sinewy wrist of the one gripping my chair. I was trying to tell her she had driven him far enough. More would have started the others in full cry of hostility against her. She understood, and when they began, in a nervous relief, to sing again, she threw at me, with a scornful toss, as if such a self-evident fact might reach me or not, since I knew its substance already:

"Do you call that answering? I call it scuttling into a hole and drawing the hole in after you."

"Don't worry," I said, in a quick undertone. "I'll look him up. If I can't, I'll pay somebody else to do it."

But there was never time to look him up. Shocked out of his security perhaps by Jane, or judging that the moment of passionate attack and victory had come, he laid siege to Anne and married her, all in three days. It was done without my knowledge, actually under the eyes of all her old friends, and yet beyond their hearing. We literally had to be told by the wedding announcement that Anne was no longer ours. The card informed us further that she would be at home without the delay of a day spent in seclusion under the moon of love.

We went, in a group as if to give one another courage, to a house in a most respectable quarter, furnished from roof to ground in a completeness of luxury, a barbarity of pomp none of us would willingly have encountered, and found her husband, the cosmopolite, unchanged, and Anne herself, all in white, like a creature caught up into an unimagined heaven and incredulous of her fortune. Others were there besides our gang, friends of his, she told me afterward, queer men of a foreign stamp, and heavy men bearing the dollar mark. A strange mingling, one balanced against the other, as if they said:

"Here are the extremes of earthly fortune and desire. But we're all at one, in some hidden way you artist-folk haven't penetrated."

Anne, after a lovely welcome of us, drew me aside into a window recess and let fall the screening cur-

tains between us and the unassorted crowd. Then she looked up at me with flower-blue eyes all dewy, and said:

"Forgive me."

"I won't," said I, stoutly at the outset, though I knew I had already forgiven.

"It was a crazy haste to marry in," she said. "But I was alone; nobody to ask, and he wanted it so."

"Nobody to ask?" said I. "You had me."

"Yes." She made pretty eyes at me. "But you'd have said: 'Wait.'"

"I should," I owned to her. "I should have said: 'Let me look him up.'"

"I knew it," said she. "But that would have been silly."

"Why would it?"

"Because I knew."

I hadn't a wish to shake her certainties now that the irrevocable had closed its door on her, but I couldn't help asking:

"What do you know about him?"

"I won't tell you," said Anne. "You don't deserve to hear."

"Only a word or two, Anne. Who is he? Who was his father? Who was his mother?"

Anne looked at me and laughed outright in a way unlike her, even in her happiest moments before this new wind of destiny had blown her to flowery heights.

"He is a citizen of the world," said she.

She gave me a little tap of old possession and present kindness, and swept aside the curtains for us to rejoin the tea-drinking crowd. But I understood perfectly that she merely didn't know who his father was, and that she didn't care. It was a part of her gallant bravado to glory in accepting him without the current hall marks. I went out, and dutifully, yet with a wry mind, drank tea with the bizarre assemblage, and I became conscious presently that there were no American voices save ours of the studios and no clear English speech. Some of the men were professional—I gather that—each talking about his specialty: most were deep-throated, guttural, and deficient in humor. I made a few little attempts on them in the half-ironic obliqueness current in social intercourse, and they only stared at me. They were, in some impetuous way, much in earnest and taking themselves, also in a mysterious way, with great seriousness. I escaped before the rest of our crowd and, with Jane Wall, walked dismally away, a gorgeous sunset flaming at our backs. Jane, dressed in oozy greens and salmon pinks, was a sight, but her honest face looked right to me after the strange beasts I had tried to establish connection with. She put my distaste into words.

“Did you ever see such a mob?”

“Evidently his friends,” I said, out of an unformulated desire to stand for Anne's environment.

“Evidently. And that's his house. We none of us thought he had a house. He's been hanging out at a little family hotel.”

"I suppose he found it furnished," I volunteered, again remembering we spoke of Anne's husband.

"Fiddle faddle! that house was furnished out of his brain a good long time beforehand, and it shows he knew she'd have him."

I made no civil pretext of wanting to walk home with Jane Wall. I felt I could not endure the assault of one more bare brutality, and left her at the next corner. It seemed to me probable, as I smoked my pipe alone that evening, that I should never enter Anne's house again.

But I did enter. I was drawn by a dismal desire to assure myself whether she really was happy, and though her gay welcome and her cozy confidences left no doubt of the matter, I went again and again. And every time I found the same frequenters of the house. They were not merely there on public days. They swarmed in it. There were alien presences at all hours coming and going, an orgie, Jane Wall said, of hospitality. She brazenly went whenever she was invited and even stayed the night, and she assured me there were as many camping aliens at breakfast as at midnight suppers, and over them all Anne presided joyously, a lavish hostess, loving her hideous house because it had been decreed for her, adoring her husband and being adored. Jane called the flocking aliens hateful names: locusts, devouring the land, Sindbads, crooks. She talked so shamelessly about them and I listened so unprotestingly that I began to doubt our right, in decency, to go to Anne's house at all. But one day Anne herself

told me a startling thing. I was calling, and she ran downstairs with me at the end, and there, on a sofa in a little reception room, we came on a bearded Sindbad sound asleep. I was for waking him and turning him out neck and crop. I had a certainty he was not staying in the house, but Anne stood clutching my arm and laughing noiselessly at my nervousness and the drollery of the situation.

"Do you know who he is?" I asked her.

"No," she whispered, overcome by the absurdity of it. "I don't know him from Adam."

"I won't leave you in the house with fellows from nobody knows where," I told her. "Come, be a good girl. I'm going to pitch him out."

"But he's a perfect right to be here," she assured me.

"How do you know?"

"Because he couldn't have got in if he hadn't."

"You don't know how he got in," I reminded her.

"Oh, yes, I do. He has a latchkey. They all have latchkeys."

"What!" I said, feeling for an instant I'd caught her off guard—"all those hordes of the desert? Do you mean to tell me they've the entrée to your house unannounced?"

"Bless you, yes," said Anne. She was hanging on my arm and still regarding the prone sleeper with amusement not tinged with the slightest apprehension. "Of course they have. It was theirs before my husband took it." She always said "my husband" in a prim way, as if she held the shield of her

possession, to guard him from incidental judgments. "They met here, you know."

"They?" I ventured. "Is it a club?"

She grew instantly serious. A little frown knit itself between her brows. She had betrayed something. And at that moment the front door opened and Fieldman came in, singing. He was red with the cold, full of life, bountifully happy, and Anne left my arm and fled to him in a still but absolutely apparent passion of welcome. He was not careless of her, but he was, my eyes told me, used to that sort of implied largess and could pass it over without a tremendous recognition, knowing what endless riches she had for him and what unstinted moments. Besides, he saw me, and, through the door, the sleeping invader. He put Anne aside with a little word, nodded to me, and went in to his guest. And immediately I had the feeling that Anne, the inner, immaterial part of her, was wafting me away. She was terribly afraid I should stay too long, in some manner insinuate myself into that dialogue between the master of the house and his guest, and I was hurt enough to go with an offended haste. At the door she leaned forward to me as I halted on the upper step, and asked me a hasty question.

"Did you hear," she trembled, in an anxious undertone, "what they said?"

"No," I told her, looking her straight in the face.

It was a lie. I had heard. The two were talking rapidly in an alien tongue, the stranger and Fieldman who had said he spoke only English.

After that I didn't go to the house for a long time, but one night it drew me, the thought of its hideous magnificence imprisoning her in her beauty like the toad with the jewel in his head. I had to go once in so often, I told myself, to assure my elderly heart she was safe. From what? I never asked myself. A woman with such happy eyes was more than safe. She had entered into the security of the eternally loving and the well-beloved. The amount of it was, I owned now, as, in spite of me, my feet carried me up the steps, I had to see her at intervals, merely because I loved her, to bathe my sick desires in the well of her kind eyes. I always came away from her refreshed, able to live in my still seclusions a little longer. I was taken into the library where she sat alone by the fire in the serene companionship of a book. She was in blue and white, Madonna colors, and for the first time I thought of her having a child, and the thought choked me. She sprang up, instantly all gay glance and motion. She was glad to see me, and we sat down and talked in our old way, as if no citizen of the world had ever shut her up in his tawdry house. I didn't ask for Fieldman. It was apparent he was away from home, which was all that affected me. But suddenly, about half an hour after my coming, a door opened somewhere on the landing above, and a flood of men's voices came out and ceased again as the door closed. I looked at her, with a little smile perhaps, I felt so fortunate in being intimately alone with her and not invited to go appropriately up and intern myself with

my kind. She answered my look with a smile, reminiscent, I thought, proud.

"Yes," she said, "they're up there. This is a special night."

"Special?" I asked. I did want to know something about Fieldman's activities.

She quenched the smile, as if it might tell me more than she intended.

"I'm always indiscreet with you," she said. "With nobody else. I've assured him so."

"Indiscreet?" I ventured again. "It's a secret session?"

"You're making me indiscreet again," she frowned, rueful over her own lapses, and yet amused at them, too, she did trust me so completely. That is the long, proud feather in my cap, and I am glad to wave it here. "However, it doesn't matter. I don't really know anything. But I am to know very soon. He is to tell me. I'm to be taken in."

"Into the society?" I asked.

"Not that exactly. But told things. You can't guess how proud I shall be. Don't you see? Till then I'm not quite his wife. There's one part of him I don't share."

"You've shared everything else?" I suggested gently, the gaunt shadow of Jane Wall at my side egging me on.

She tightened her lips and looked me in the eyes.

"Everything," she said firmly.

"Then," said I, "little Anne, just for old sake's sake—to quiet down my parental flutterings, you

know—tell me who he is. His nationality, at least.” Anne looked at me a moment, pale to the lips. But she got a smile out of the lips then, and the gay little laugh followed.

“I told you,” said she. “He’s a citizen of the world.”

So I laughed too, and we talked about safer things. But the current of our amity had been deflected and I didn’t get much further satisfaction out of my call. Again, toward eleven, the door opened and closed, and a man ran down the stairs and out of the house, and after that Anne grew visibly uneasy. Suddenly I understood. She was afraid the meeting would break up and they would all come down, perhaps continuing the tags of their talk, and her husband would find me there and be annoyed. So I took my leave in a hurry, and she, I saw, understood and was grateful to me. At least I could still win meager favors of gratitude and confidence, though the big prizes had all gone.

But the next time I went to her house I was not admitted, nor was I the second time and the third. It was not difficult to read the hint. The citizen of the world had found my casual presence too near the outer bounds, at least, of his relations. I stayed away and nursed my resentment against him and whatever unclassed tenderness I had for her. Jane Wall, too, was denied, but she was furious and kept on going, confident, she said, it was no order of Anne’s, and challenged by the shut look of the place. Even the upper windows, she declared, were non-

committal. Their heavy curtains fell with an actual hostility. She was even prepared, if she could get anywhere near them, to find the panes themselves barred. But she never did get near them, nor did I.

It was one night about six months after this that I was by my own fire in my unfashionable part of the town, reading a little, thinking a great deal. My house was a gem in the heart of that ignored precinct. I had furnished it bit by bit at the slow pace of one who crawls cautiously toward the desired perfection of a work of art. The whole thing was small, a cameo set to a wonderful standard of excellence I had always held in my mind. I knew how the whole thing had worked out. It had begun with my mother's old-fashioned house full of a mellowed loveliness, and it had grown with the thought of Anne some time in the midst of it. Strange wistful solacings the hungry mind allows itself! I had known from the beginning that Anne would never be for me anything but the unattainable though recognized well-beloved. Yet I had built her house, and on nights when I was most desolately at home in it I saw the imagined reality of her sitting there, moving about, supremely at ease. This night especially she was there in a free, gay happiness. That was why the fire sprang so high and bright. I shut my book on my knee and narrowed my eyes to the smallest slit that would admit the fire blaze and at the same time shut out the emptiness beside me. For a moment I was almost happy, as we are over such rueful expedients. I hardly knew

whether I was in the body or out of it, and at a sound I looked up, not to be surprised if I found her really there. And there in the doorway she stood, changed from my last sight of her, worn in an inexplicable way, and yet with a new loveliness, almost a majesty, a divinity. This was again the Madonna look, and she was wrapped about in the Madonna color, a great blue cloak.

As I said, I felt no surprise. I got up and drew forward the other chair an inch. I had an idea we were perhaps not to speak, the understanding between us seemed likely to run on such swift and soundless wheels. But she spoke, quietly, practically:

"I wouldn't let him announce me. I don't know why."

I offered to take her cloak.

"No," said she. "I'll keep it on."

She sat down in the hearthside chair, still with the blue cloak wrapped about her. I threw on a log, and the flames leaped.

"No," she said again in answer to my questioning offer of drawing the chair still nearer. "I'm not cold. But I'll keep my cloak. David, what time it is?"

She had never before used my name; but I was not surprised at hearing it now, only warmed somehow as if it fitted the everyday peace of our companionship. I told her the time and she seemed to gather herself for some determined effort.

"I've things to tell you," she said. I kept my eyes on hers, but I did not answer. There was no

need of answering except by that grave communion of the eyes. "I have been making up my mind to it for a good many months. It is a secret. It was confided to me. And I'm going to tell."

"It sha'n't go farther," I assured her.

"It can go as much farther as you like," said she. "I trust you absolutely to do the best thing with it. I can't do anything. I'm tied. But you'll know. You'll do it. I leave it in your hands." A ghost of her old smile ran over her face then. She wrinkled her brows at me in that wistful way she had. "David," said she, "I don't exactly know how to begin. Ask me questions."

"How is your husband?" I began at random.

She drew a little breath. "That's right," she said. "That starts me. He is away, on business. Tomorrow morning he will get the letter I have written him, telling him where I have gone and that he won't find me when he comes back."

For an instant of sickening delight I almost believed she had left him and come to me in every sense beyond that of her bodily presence. I couldn't ask my question, but she answered it.

"Yes," she said, "I have left him. I shall never go back, unless—"

Suddenly I felt a red-hot anger, and that, too, she must have read.

"No, David," said she gently; "not that. He has been good to me: delightful, too, in an enchanting way. It has never failed me. It's only that I told myself I must stop being enchanted."

"You love him?" I blundered.

"I am not thinking of that," she said. "There are things I've got to do, and if I think of things in that way—love, you know—I can't do them."

For a moment she was shaken by the piteous apparition of the things she must not remember. I could see her desperate need of woman's resource from passion, wild tears, shipwreck on the desolate shore of lost hopes, and then a forlorn placidity. I could fancy she had traversed all that. She had been almost drowned in some sea and then cast up again, and she shuddered away from such devastating overthrow.

"You remember," she said, "I told you—indiscreetly—that I was to be let into the secret of the meetings at the house."

It was betrayal itself, the impersonality of her never once calling the house hers or his. I nodded.

"I see why I was to be told. It was not only because it would be safer, but because he truly wanted me to become a part of him. He had a great idea of my courage and fidelity and my love for him. He believed the thing he wanted with his whole heart I should want, too, and we should be one in a—almost a glorious way."

She stopped here and bit her lip. I could see a pulse beating in her throat.

"Yes, Anne," I said. "You'd be as true as steel."

"That's it," said she quickly. "That's precisely the point. He thought I should be true; but I am not. I am betraying him to you."

Now I didn't understand. If she loved him—and what was it but the beseeching memory of love she had to put behind her?—why could she not be true to him? She began again, moistening her dry lips:

"He is a traitor. They are all traitors, those men. They are conspiring against the government."

"But," I said stupidly, "he is an American citizen."

"That, I suppose," said Anne wearily, "is what makes it treason."

I looked at her dumbly, and then, I must confess, the personal side of it came over me, and I broke out:

"How he must have trusted you!"

"Yes," she said, "absolutely." She lifted her head a little and looked her pride. But the pride did not last long. It flowed into the humility of a softer passion, unavailing, yet inevitable regret. "He owned that he hadn't really known me at the first. He had been attracted to me. It was love, as he understood it then. But in living with me he saw it all differently. He decided I was worthy of big things. He had a vision of what we could do, we two, if I felt as he did. And he hadn't any doubt whatever that I should."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm putting it in your hands," said she simply. "You will know."

"Have you evidence?" I asked.

"None but my word. They have papers, plans, letters, photographs. These were in a safe in the

room they used to meet in. But he took them west with him. I found the safe empty."

"Then he did suspect you," I exclaimed.

"No. I kissed him good-by. Judas! It is my impression he took them west to some meeting there."

"And your letter simply tells him you have left his house? Do you think that will make him suspect anything further?"

"No. I took pains to make it affectionate and kind. Judas! He will come back to the house. You can arrest him there if you think best."

It seemed to me monstrous, the thing itself, the colossal plot against her happiness. I saw what miles her bleeding feet had carried her before she could compass this present calm. She had made pilgrimage about the world of grief and back again, not once only, but many times, before she could have reached this spot.

"Anne," I said, in a wild grasp at hope for her, "you do love him."

"I've done thinking of that," she said. "I told you so. See here, David." She stretched out one delicate hand and laid it on the little table between us, and there it lay clasping and unclasping as she talked. While I live I cannot forget the picture of that agonized hand, talking as her lips talked, and allowed, though they were not, its signs of agony. "My father was a New England judge. He was a man of reputation, of strict honor. My grandfathers on both sides were farmers. So were my great-

grandfathers. They were good, plain men. And they were Americans. I hadn't realized what that meant till I was told what had been going on in that locked room in the house I've lived in. It's been growing and growing in me. And it's come to birth. I'm an American, David, as my father was and all those plain, honest men behind us."

I couldn't answer. But she had more to say. Her face twisted into an anguish dreadful to see. In the flash before I could turn my eyes mercifully away from it, I even wondered if her poor mouth were convulsed by actual disorder of the nerves. After this she talked as if she were cold, and sometimes her teeth clicked on the words.

"It isn't that you choose," she said, "that I choose and say a man isn't worth the entire world to me. He is worth the whole world of warmth and pleasure and luxury, or life—life itself; but there's something in all those generations behind you you can't deny, any more than you can deny God. If the man you— you belong to—is—a traitor, you've got to—give him up."

And she had given him up to me. I was to be the one to carry out the breaking of her heart to the last issue. She read my horror of the task, and the white hand lay there lax and besought pardon.

"Couldn't help it, David," she said. "I tried to think of another way, and there wasn't any. But somehow, I've got to stand up to it. Got to, David."

Damning myself for my stupidity in not doing it before, I opened a cabinet and brought her a glass

of cordial. She sipped it, and a little color came back into her cheeks.

"The other thing I've got to stand up to—that's what helped me make up my mind," she said. "I couldn't let a baby have the wrong kind of mother."

A few minutes after I found I was sitting there, my head bent, and she was standing by me, touching my hair with the kind, tortured hand.

"Poor Davy!" she was saying. Only my mother had called me that. "Good boy! dear friend! You'll think for me now. I don't know what you'll have to do. But it's all in your hands. If they want me to—to testify—or anything—" Here she staggered a step backward into her chair, and I got up and pulled her cloak about her, murmuring I don't know what words of love and pity. "You'll see him," she said, looking up at me with despairing eyes. "You'll tell him I set the trap for him. I couldn't warn him or he would have stayed away and kept on plotting. Spying, too, David. They are spies." Then she leaned her head back and shut her eyes and rested so a moment. She opened her eyes quickly, as they do who start suddenly awake. "My only hope, David, is this," she said. "That he will understand. He worships his own country—where he was born, you know. Maybe he can understand my feeling about mine. I don't know."

"You mean not to see him again?" I ventured. "You would refuse?"

Her face awoke quite gloriously. "See him?" she repeated. "Yes. Work for him, stand by him, take his disgrace with him. If he'll let me. But my own work's got to be done first."

"Where are you going, Anne," I asked, "from here?"

I had flooding schemes of hiding places I could buy for her apart from all of us.

"Why, you stupid David," said she, "I'm going to the hospital. My trunk went this morning. See, here's his address, in case things don't go well. You'll wire him. Here is mine. But you're not to come there, you're not to write me, you're not to remember me any more than if I'd taken a vow and gone into a sisterhood. I'm lost, Davie, dear, until I come back and bring my baby with me. Understand?"

I did, and we spoke little after that. She was tired to exhaustion, and her purpose, I understood, had been accomplished. As we stood together at the door—she forbade my going down with her—the Madonna blue of her cloak enveloping her in an ineffable way, she said one last word:

"Let him understand fully I set the trap for him; but tell him, if you can, I'd rather have died than set it. Tell him if he wants me—ah, well, Davie, I'm giving you too much. Maybe I can say it myself some time. Good-by."

The beautiful hand lay stanchly in mine, and while I held it I tried to say something adequate, but couldn't manage it.

"Anne, you're a great creature. You're as great as the Roman mothers we hear about."

She shook her head. A little hurt smile moved her lips.

"Ah," she said, "maybe they had plain sailing. They weren't traitors too."

I stood and looked on her, a vision of gold and blue going down my stairs, and did not follow her. At the door she turned, looked up at me, and smiled—a full smile, knowing, I suppose, how I should keep the picture of her—opened my door and was gone. And in an instant I heard the carriage taking her away. . . .

I am a patient dog of a man, and in the eleven days I had no word from her I did not seek her, I did not even look at the address she had given me. I only tried to send her my flooding, enfolding love. And every day I went past his house in the reputable street, looked up at its reticent windows, and tried to fix on my own immediate action when the master of it should return. For eleven days this continued. This morning is the morning of the thirteenth, and I am waiting for the master of the house. He has been summoned. He has been told, as I was told forty-eight hours ago, that Anne, wife of Louis Fieldman, died in hospital at midnight, she and her infant son.

THE TORCH OF LIFE

"MR. HARRY has come, miss," said the maid, hurrying in, with deepened color, to announce a name dedicated in that household to general worship.

Miss Evelyn May, Harry's great-aunt, given over to a mild enjoyment of the sunny morning-room, laid down her book and turned upon the woman a face of surprised interrogation.

"Harry? Not Harry! He is in France."

"Mr. Harry, miss. He's down in the library. The boat got in at five."

"Show him up," said the old lady. There was a warm excitement in her look. "Or, no. Tell him to wait there. I'll come down." She rose, shook out her draperies and turned to the tall glass. This was in many respects an amazing old woman. For one thing, she had resolved early that, although she wrote books, she would never incur the odium earned by a slattern sisterhood. She had been softly pretty in youth, and a fresh good health had lasted her like a magic mantle. Her age was exquisite in its care and finish. All her appointments were significantly fine, yet with no specious hint in them of a desire to push back the hands a point upon the dial. They were of no type save that of beauty. Her small face still held a tinge of pink, her pompadoured hair shone with a lovely lustre, and her white house-dress

was a wonder of old lace. The look she gave herself now was critical, not admiring, and she turned away from the glass the moment its use had been accomplished. Then, holding up her draperies in one delicate hand, she went down to the library, where impatiently, in the morning sunshine, Harry was awaiting her. He met her at the door and kissed both her hands before accepting her proffered welcome. He was tall and brown, with a free glance warm with all the confidence of youth.

"Well, my own child," said Miss Evelyn, following him to the sofa, where they sat side by side, holding each other's hands like playmates, "what are you here for?"

"I got in this morning, Aunt Ev." He said it imploringly. "Don't scold me."

"Scold you! I didn't want you to stay over there. You went for fun. Haven't you had it?"

"I mean, don't wonder, don't think anything is odd. They'll be here in half an hour."

"They?"

"I've made some friends. I'm bringing them to see you."

"People you met on the steamer?"

"No, no, Aunt Evelyn,—in France. A French gentleman and—his granddaughter." The beautiful ingenuousness of his face, its air of quick appeal, stirred and enlightened her.

"Oh," she breathed corroboratively, "his granddaughter." Then she laid the other hand on his. "Dear child," she said, "I'm so glad."

He was eager to repudiate her approval in the first fulness of it.

"No," he insisted, "don't be glad, not altogether glad—yet. You see, we don't—so far, her grandfather and I—quite hit it off."

"Her grandfather? Hasn't she anything nearer?"

"No. She's in his charge. He approves of me. He likes me, man to man; but he wanted her to marry in France, and so he's come with me to—well, to look me up, you know. I think he's nervous about the whole thing. He wants to do his utmost to break it off without taking the responsibility of doing it. He won't really do it, because he's a good fellow, and she—well, she won't let him."

"No," said Miss Evelyn, in the most delicately comprehending vein, "I see. She wouldn't let him."

The young man gave an awkward little laugh; yet there was a proud assurance in his bearing.

"She's a nice girl, Aunt Evelyn," he said, answering her tone.

"But she isn't over here, too?" suggested Miss Evelyn interrogatively.

He nodded, his eyes quite glowing with reminiscence of the voyage with her—six days and seven moonlit nights of fun and rhapsody.

"What does she come for? You say she doesn't want to break it off?"

Again he laughed, remembering the Frenchman's unprofitable resistance in the face of a girl's decision.

"He never thought of her coming. She would do it."

"That sounds American. What's her name, dear?"

"Angélique." He gave the name the circumflex of a caress. "Angélique de Trouville."

"Trouville!"

"Yes." His answer to her glance was one of pride. "You've hit it, Aunt Ev. It's the poet's granddaughter."

"Armand de Trouville!"

Her voice had the sweep of meanings too manifold for the compass of one word. It made the name eloquent in rich suggestion.

The young man nodded in his pride in having done so admirably toward satisfying her instincts with his own.

"Armand de Trouville," he repeated—"the man that wrote the lyrics. The man that other Frenchman came over here to lecture about when I was in college. Yes, if you please. And I should say he'd be here inside of ten minutes." She looked a blankness of wonder that made him laugh and then consider her. He patted her hand affectionately. "Don't flinch, Aunt Ev," he counselled. "He's a big gun, but no bigger than you. He knows about you, too. I got your books for him, and he read 'em on the steamer. He longs to see you."

The bell rang below, and they continued staring. The woman was white with some unexplained intensity of feeling; the young man quivered with impatience to meet his happy fate. He listened.

"Mary's taking them into the red room," he said.

"Angélique is with him." Then, catching the expression of her face, he added hastily: "But she sha'n't come up. I'll go down and take her to walk while he has his interview."

She smiled a little then. "Is that what modern French girls do?" she asked. "Go to walk alone with young men in strange cities? They didn't do that in the novels."

"Angélique will." He nodded in hilarious confidence. "He won't let her, but she will."

Again he put her hands hastily to his lips and hurried out of the room as Mary entered with a card. A moment later Mary appeared again, after her return down-stairs, ushering in Monsieur de Trouville.

Evelyn May had in the meantime not given a thought to her looks or the turbulence of her mind. This was not so much a meeting with a distinguished caller as an incredible spiritual experience, one that might be the commonplace of paradise, but not of earth. She was standing when he entered the room, ready to greet him with a fine composure. He was exactly what she had expected to find him, save that the lustre of the eyes, the point of light in them, was something which even the faithful sun could not reproduce. He was tall, well poised, and graceful, with a composure of his own. He was spoken of as a giant among Frenchmen, but his size, to her partial mind, contributed to his simplicity and gentleness. The profile, beautiful enough for a coin, the close gray mustache, the iron-gray hair, she was prepared for

them all through portraiture, and yet the reality of the man brought her a wistful sense of satisfaction close upon the pangs of youth. He bowed over her hand, and pronounced her full name with "Mademoiselle" prefixed; and then, ceremoniously waiting until he had seen her placed, and even bringing a footstool for her, in quick divination, he seated himself and leaned forward to say, with a sudden smile, and in faultless English made piquant by the slightest accent:

"Your books are beautiful."

"So is your English," she returned, smiling back at him with a sense of old acquaintanceship.

"My mother was an Englishwoman. She had been on the stage. Then, too, I was at Oxford."

"I know."

"You know?" He raised his eyebrows.

"We all know everything about you, monsieur. An author as famous as you lives under glass."

"And you?"—he drew her again into kinship. "Do these clever American people know about you also? Your family tree, what you have for breakfast?"

She met his banter with a laugh.

"Pretty nearly. But there are a great many like me. No one is like you."

He rose to make his bow.

"I thank you, mademoiselle," he said, with the humility she expected of him. Then, as he seated himself, it seemed to be to settle to conclusions barring raillery. "I find in you," he continued, with

a judicial firmness, looking past her as if he sought an impersonal attitude of mind forbidding intimate interchange,—“I find in your books an extraordinary beauty. They are simple. They are true. If I could have written in English, I should have liked to do them, word for word.”

She was breathing faster. Her face had taken on a flush that filled its lines and softened it to a transcript of what it had been years before. She spoke rapidly, her hands accenting the words and speaking with her.

“Listen, monsieur. It is as if you did write them. Forty years ago I had not heard of you. Forty years! How recklessly we speak of years when we are old! Thirty-nine years ago I heard of you for the first time. I was discontented, sad. I was writing books, and nobody wanted them. Then I read your *Souvenir*. It made me over. At once I had hope, courage. The blood came back into my veins. The sun shone in at the window, the birds sang—monsieur, I was alive.” Involuntarily she was adopting a style of speech alien to her own. It was as if she tried to make herself more intelligible, not to his ear, but to his mind, through little remembered notes, echoes from his own fluent style.

He had caught the fire of her revelation.

“Then,” said he, “I will tell you what happened. Your second book came out just before my next one; but they might have been written by the same hand. Not in the style, but the intention. And so it followed. You have not written so many books as I,

but in your essays and my verse we have gone step and step, hand in hand. Is it not so, mademoiselle?"

She answered gently and with a quiet pride, a little smile curving the corners of her mouth.

"Oh, I know that is so! I have always known it."

"I didn't know it until last week, when I began to read your books with—what shall I tell you?—with a boredom, an exasperation I cannot describe. You were a species I hate—a woman that meddles with the arts to please her vanity, to stultify her heart. Oh, I know, mademoiselle, those women are not all so. There were the great ones. My homage to them. My homage to you also, mademoiselle—to you also."

Again he got up to make his bow, and she rose also and accepted it with a curtsy she never remembered having tried before. But it came naturally. She had a double consciousness of being herself and also a lady in a long hall in France, with garlands upon the wall, and other ladies and other courtly gentlemen, and mirrors all about them reduplicating their graces and their charm. It had all happened before, though perhaps only in her mind, where he had dwelt so long.

"But you knew it," he said, as they again sat regarding each other. "You knew we were twin workfellows?"

"Oh, yes!" Again she spoke quietly. "I read you. Everybody did, you were so great. You couldn't have read me possibly. There was never

more than one edition of me for any book, and nobody bought that. The likeness between what we said was so marked that if your books had come out first, I shouldn't have published mine. Fortunately, in point of time, you kept a step behind me."

"You knew it," he repeated. The tone held an ingenuous reproach. He followed it with the climax: "And you did nothing! If *I* had been the one to know, I should have come to find you."

"Ah," she breathed, in an involuntary betrayal beyond anything she had imagined in her dreams of what might happen if she should meet him in some other life, "I went and I did not find you."

"You came to France?"

She clasped her hands upon her knee, swaying in her slenderness like a girl. She spoke reflectively, judging from point to point how much to tell.

"I am seventy years old, monsieur."

"That is nothing," he interrupted gallantly. "I am seventy-one. I am young. We are very young, both of us."

"I am seventy years old. When I read your *Souvenir* and it illuminated my life, I felt perhaps older than I do now. I had loved a man. I thought I loved him, but I presently found out that it was not the man; it was his youth, reënforcing my youth. When I found out what it was to him, I—" She shrugged her shoulders in a quick distaste. "I do not think of this, monsieur," she continued, with a proud glance at him. "It is tawdry to me, and I do not accept anything tawdry for my life. But

at that time it soiled the whole earth. Then I read your book. I said, Here is somebody great enough to guide me. I began to think your thoughts. I walked in the path you had hewn out. Presently my life was reconstructed. You had made me."

"But France," he urged. His eyes also spoke. They had gained in their luminous intensity. They beckoned, they insisted with a force that was the very gentleness of power. "You came to France?"

"I went to France. By that time I fancied I knew you very well. I spent a month in Tours."

"In Tours? A mile away from me!"

She smiled, in wistful memory.

"I waited a week, monsieur. I asked no one about you, and then, in the beginning of your fame, fewer personalities were broadcast about authors than at present, when every farthing dip has its reflector. I knew only that you lived on a beautiful road—ah, yes, I remember the name," she interrupted him, as he was about to form the word. "I walked there every day, only never so far as your château. But one day, after I had been there a week, I started out, my two poor little books in my hand, to make an offering to you. I reached your gate, my feet faltering under me. There was a high garden wall. Before I could ring, I heard a voice behind the wall. It was a woman—singing."

"My wife! It must have been my wife."

"Yes, monsieur. You were married. I had known that, of course, before. Your wife was Lisette, of the Opéra—La Belle Lisette."

"But why did you not ring? Or—you were not admitted?"

"I did not ring, monsieur."

"Why?"

"I don't know," she answered, simply. "I turned back to Tours, and the next week I went home."

He got up and paced the floor from window to window, snatching a glance from each, as he approached it, at the bright American sky. That day there was no veiling atmosphere. It seemed to him without, as within, a world of clear, bright revelation.

"What year was that?" he asked her, turning suddenly.

She told him.

"My wife left me the next January," he said curtly. "Did you hear that?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Everybody heard of it, in France, in America, in England. I was well known enough by that time to have it count." He sat down, and remained there in silence, his hands hanging loosely clasped between his knees, his eyes upon the floor. Presently he looked up at her. "I have not spoken of it," he said, simply, "to any one, till now."

She shook her head, and again there was silence between them, broken at length by his voice, abruptly shaken.

"Have you known about her since?"

"No."

"She died, in Hungary, six years after they went away together. They were happy, I think. She regretted nothing, not even her child. He was with her to the last."

"You had her child?" she ventured.

"Yes. She grew up a kind, stolid creature. She took back to our peasant ancestry. Then when Angélique was born, she died."

"Ah, Angélique! We were to talk of Angélique."

"Dear mademoiselle!" He laughed outright. "How far Angélique seems from the loves and heart-breaks of old years!"

"Yet it is the same," she protested loyally, with a quick thought of Harry. "It is just the same."

"The spring renews itself, you think. Yet you know as well as I that even the spring is different sometimes. They tell me—your Harry told me—that your American autumn is sometimes yellow, sometimes soft and sere. So with the spring, mademoiselle—so with the spring. Tell me,"—he fixed his eyes upon her in keen interrogation,—“when you knew my wife had left me, were you sorry?”

"I was very sorry. My heart ached for you. I was afraid it would cripple you, your genius, your beautiful art."

"Did it cripple me?"

"No, monsieur. It changed you, but it did not cripple you."

"How was I changed?"

"You were harder. It was the hand of iron that wrote, not the supple, human hand. Ah, Monsieur

de Trouville, you clung through everything to your old ideals, but you were no longer confident that they would wear. You used to say, Life is thus. Now you said, Life should be thus. You had lost faith that it could be."

"You knew me well," he brooded. "You knew me well."

"That was in the essays, where you spoke with voluntary authority; but in your poems the spirit took possession of you and kindled the old flame. I used to smile, monsieur, over the difference. I used to laugh sometimes in triumph, as a mother might over a son who couldn't escape his heritage, and say to myself, 'It is not lost yet.'"

He beat the table beside him, for a moment, with an impatient hand. His brows were clouded. They smoothed out with the conclusion of his thought.

"I will tell you," he said, "some things I have not told anybody. I give you the key, mademoiselle, but only because you have it already—one exactly like it. The great quickener of life, in one form or another, is what we call love."

"Yes, I know."

"It has many forms; but its ecstasy is the love between men and women. That is the blossom, the topmost blossom on the tree of life, remote, defended by a thousand natural impulses. It is the torch, always kept burning and passed along from mother to daughter, from father to son. I felt that love, mademoiselle. I thought I felt it. But when I found it had been in her nothing but the quick warm

instinct that comes also to the birds, when I found she could settle on another branch, so that she found it safe,—I, too, ceased to love, mademoiselle. I was not more constant than she.” He looked at her with the questioning face of a child who has done what may have been wrong, though he has no way of estimating how wrong it is. “You are disappointed in me?” he asked, entreatingly, at length. “You would like it better if I could say I had clung to my dream, even after she broke it for me?”

She shook her head. There were tears in her eyes, and she found it better not to answer him directly.

“I know what you felt, then,” she said, “what you resolved to feel. You said: ‘It is not possible for that dream ever to come true, for any man, for any woman. Years from now, if there are giants on the earth, it may come true, or in some place where there are angels; but not here with us.’”

“So I stopped seeking,” he said confirmingly. “If I had believed there was a mate for me, do you think I should have rested till I found her?”

“No,” she answered, in a low tone, “you would not have rested. But perhaps it is better that you gave up that quest and starved your heart and wrote your books.”

He got up and stood towering before her. “No,” he said,—“no. Don’t make that mistake. It may be better for us to be cut and pruned; but if we can, if there is the sap in us, it is also better that we should answer to the knife, and put out blossoms on new

branches. No, child, no. Starve till you get the food you need, and then eat it. Don't push it away from you because you have got used to starving. When I think of a new heaven and a new earth—" He paused, and she took up the prophecy.

"I know. You think of them peopled by beautiful beings whose desires can be satisfied because they run in one channel with the law. Yes, and so do I."

"But you think with me that it is not possible now, as the world is to-day?"

She pondered for a moment, wondering, he could see, with that prescience of her that was as natural now as any familiar habit of his life, if she could trust her real Frenchman as she had been wont to trust the man inhabiting her dreams. The decision made, she looked up at him, frankly smiling.

"No, monsieur," she said, "I do not think that at all."

"I knew it. I saw it in your books. You are ending your life with the same belief in the passion of love that you had when you were twenty."

She corrected him gently.

"Not the same, monsieur. A greater belief and better grounded."

"But you have not—" He stopped, and she filled out the broken sentence.

"No, I have not married. But I have lived. I have looked on. I have seen the bud of love flower into quiet loyalty. I have seen pleasure lost in humble service."

"Also, you have seen the bud blighted, and young liking lost in self-love or—deceit."

"Yes. But it is all—ah, monsieur, it is only another of the choices we are given." She paused a moment and looked at him as if she begged indulgence for the enormous egotism of her importunity, and his eyes reassured her. For him, she knew at last, as for her, the warmth of their mutual comprehension had melted the rigidities of speech, and made their interchange as fluent as pure thought.

"Nothing was ever so generous," she hurried on, "as the Maker of this earth. 'Take it,' He said. 'Use it, or deface it. Plant flowers, or let it go to rack. Do anything you like—and take the consequences.' Monsieur,"—her voice faltered a little,— "that is how it is with love. It is an immense choice, the greatest one of all. We can make something beautiful, or something tawdry."

"But if we begin with a mistake?"

"Then we must be patient—or maybe plant again."

"I did not plant again. And you—"

She looked past him, smiling, wondering if it mattered whether he understood. Again he was walking back and forth from window to window. At length he stopped in front of her.

"Have you had," he asked, "a happy life?"

"The last part of it. The first was tempestuous, full of hungers and discontent. But since then—since I have been old, monsieur, I have been happy."

"Why?"

She pondered. Presently she looked up at him in a smiling candor.

"I am not sure. Perhaps it is that after we have really given up the earth, we look back upon it and know that if we kept one great loyalty we had enough."

"And that you did. You kept your one great loyalty."

"Yes, monsieur."

Still he was looking down at her, and when he spoke his voice held that wistful tenderness devoted from of old to the worship of women and children.

"What finger beckoned me to you! What strange wind blew me here at last!"

She looked up at him whimsically, though her eyes had tears in them.

"Angélique, monsieur. It was Angélique."

"Yes. I came over in a fit of irritation. I hoped I should find him—your Harry—undesirable in some way. I wanted Angélique to marry in her own country. I thought it would be safer—a practical alliance—than this spring passion."

"They are coming, I think," she interrupted him. "I hear voices in the hall."

He was smiling at her. His eyes were wet.

"They must marry," he said, "the boy and girl. You will like Angélique. She has the best of her mother in her and the best of me. I had meant to stay here a week only—" He paused, facing a doubt, an indecision that might have been fostered by a younger heart.

But the woman finished for him, gravely.

"That is right, monsieur. You will go back next week, and take her with you. If they care enough, they can wait, six months, a year. Then he can go to France."

"They shall marry," he confirmed himself, musingly. "We will pass along the torch to them. They shall finish what we began."

She nodded gratefully.

"I say what we began," he went on. "But it was you alone. You knew me. You kept your hand on me and steadied me, all these years. It is only now I know you."

"It is the same thing, monsieur. One hand can keep the fire burning, if it is faithful."

There were light steps on the stairs, and a gust of laughter was borne in to them as if it floated like a cloud of flower incense from a procession of the spring. The woman rose to meet her guests. Monsieur de Trouville put out his hand, and she gave hers frankly. He spoke in haste, because the lilting voices were so near: "It is your gift to them—the flaming torch."

THE TRYST

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THAT a man nearing forty is far from being in his right mind when he even contemplates an excursion with two recently married couples, one of the brides being she whom he has not been able to cease loving with an ardor intensified by the certainty that he had been denied his chance with her by circumstance only, bare circumstance, a matter of staying in a place eight and three-quarters days instead of nine, thereby missing her by a train—this is pathologically evident. I was the man. I was at Naples, with no more idea that Julia and her young husband were there for an ecstatic minute of their bridal tour than I had that I should be dining with them in a kind of enraged content, being offered fruit from her soft finger-tips I would have died to kiss—I let myself go now in the telling of it as I let myself go mentally at that incredible dinner, since, after all, there has to be a moment's delirium even for a man of forty who has got his wound. I had met them face to face in the street, I absurdly chaffering for corals I didn't want, only to spur the vendor's verbal acrobatics, and then meaning to go on to the Aquarium and pretend I had an interest in fins and octopi, when they came on me, the radiant four of them, she and her Jack, Billy Petersham and his new wife, who had been a widow, over-corseted and creaking.

She always, in spite of decency, made you think of her stays, and I never saw her without a vague nautical memory that stays are something a boat is warped into or warped out of, and I never could resist the certainty that she had got in and stayed warped. They greeted me, three of them, with the hilarious ecstasy of the inordinately joyous crowded up one more notch of bliss by the spectacle of the enforcedly abstemious for whom the cupboard is bare of

“syrops tinct with cinnamon”

and the heavenly manna of verified illusion.

“Dine with us, old boy,” Jack said at once, and mentioned the gilded hotel on the height where I had been too tame-spirited to go.

I looked at him a second before I answered, looked him up and down perhaps, for I had a chance to think how fresh-colored his face was, how hued by blood so good and so new that it might have run from heavenly founts, how white his teeth were, and how his honest eyes met me with their old clarity and kindness, but more—a challenge, perhaps, to note how happy he was, and what a conqueror. I noted his exquisite clothes, too, his lilac tie—I knew the stockings matched it, if only the eye could have got at them—his general look of something flowered out in the spring. He was a splendor, no mistake. I must have hesitated, for before I answered, Julia was holding out her hand, that slender hand I knew in all its gloved seclusion, in its slim, lovely length as it fed her beautiful lips—she held it out to

me, and I took it and forgot Jack's question and his tie. I only stood and stared into that face I had so hungered for—and yet I had seen it night upon night, framed in the black wall of darkness, or against the moving tapestry of my shut eyes—I had been seeing it, I thought, “every day i' the hour” since she had been reft away by her Jack; but only God He knew how horribly I had been longing to set eyes once more upon its fair reality. She was above all women beautiful, not because I loved her, but chiefly that she was so kind. The faint flush, the fineness of her cheek, the glory of hair all gold and rarer, the wistful look of her blue eyes: these a lover, if he had been also a poet, might inadequately have sung. But nobody in this generation, nobody but a dead and gone cavalier who clapped his sword in scabbard to write a lyric explaining why swords must be out and love-knots temporarily put by, only he could have hit off that human look of hers, of sympathy, of compassion, of knowing exactly how the under dog felt, with even a surprising hint of having been herself, at some time, desperately at odds with fortune and now remembering it. This was not for me, I thought, as I stood stupidly worshipping her. Julia Dove never had, I was sure, the least suspicion of my love for her. How could she, when she was engaged the day I met her, and I must have looked to her a dry old *hortus siccus* of emotions as I was, pelting round after historical data, even more desiccated than was entirely just, seen through the lilac mists of Jack's ties and hose and his beaming

glance. But now her look seemed to say inexplicably: "Dear man, be comforted. You are shockingly lonesome. So am I."

There I pulled myself up in my unlawful imaginings. She couldn't be. The candid glance meant only so she once had been before she found him and twined her soul with his. But all she really said, independently of her kind eyes, was this, oh, in the dearest voice:

"Do, Mr. Olmstead. Do come."

I dropped her hand.

"Thank you," said I, with the abruptness of one recalled. "I will."

So we five dined together in the splendor of the Bertolini, and sat on the terrace afterward like funny modern gods on Olympus, and watched the lights flaming out and twinkling out below, and heard faint touches of music, and knew the multitudinous life of the city was dancing itself blind and mad, and doing the little tasks that bought its bread, and playing its pageant because its blood ran so fast it couldn't help it, and yet thriftily, since the foreigners paid for piping. Mrs. Billy and I did most of the talking. I fancied she was rather glad of a prosaic new element, she who was almost forty herself, and getting painfully attached to succulent dishes and talk about reducing one's self and, on this occasion, my immunity from care because nature turned me out so lean. Her husband smoked and stared at her through the dusk, glorifying her into the eternal beautiful, I have no doubt, because she was new and

his; and Julia looked at the city and said nothing. It was my one hour, not to shine, not to acquire, not to do in any sense a memorable deed, but to sit in the same visible universe with Julia Dove. Once I got a little drunk with it, the wonder of it, the ineffable compassion of the upper powers to allow me this heavenly anodyne before my heart beat itself out with lonesome misery, and I found myself repeating idiotically:

“‘Only to kiss the air—’” There I stopped, and got hold of myself for a fool; but Mrs. Billy clacked in with her complacent note, perfectly ready for all challenges of give or take:

“What’s that, Mr. Olmstead? Is it a new song?”

“Not absolutely new,” said I stupidly, “though it’s for all time. It’s been running in my head. I’ve been trying to get the last line.”

“Why, I know it,” said Julia, with no hesitation in her clear young voice:

Only to kiss that air
That lately kisséd thee.

I know it all.”

And then, as if the immortals loved me, and meant to accord me one more blissful cup to live on till I died of surfeit and despair, she sat here with the lights of Naples below her in a seemly humbleness and the stars shining like her own galaxy, and repeated it all.

“Shall I write it down for you?” she asked, at the end.

“No,” said I. “I shall remember.” I got on my

feet. I'd had all I could carry. "Good-night," I said.

Then I was wishing them joy all round—joy and a fortunate trip, in a manner that, I hope, satisfied the lightly conventional; but Jack, for some reason, would not hear of losing me.

"Breakfast with us," he said. I have had an idea since that because I was staying at a meagre *pension* below he had confirmed his estimate of my poverty. "Then come on to Pompeii."

I didn't want Pompeii, or any further spectacle of marital felicity. I remembered the gentle eternal sunlit gloom of the dead city, as I had seen it before, and it appeared to me that, superadded to my own grounded sense that life itself was pretty well over, I should as soon choose an after-dinner stroll in the catacombs.

"Awfully good of you," I said, "but I'm due at Capri. I'm afraid I shall have to be leaving rather early in the morning to make it."

I was due there because I had to have a pretext, and that would serve as well as any.

"Who's at Capri?" inquired Mrs. Billy skittishly, and I tried dismally to look as if somebody very fetching indeed might be there; whereupon she forgot she was mated and settled again, and bridled in the old way. "Well, we'll let you off from Pompeii," she conceded, "but you simply must meet us at Pæstum."

Immediately, not because she said it, for what she said meant to me, as it did to every man save Billy,

less than the crackling of thorns under a pot—for I suppose a sufficient crackling might boil the dinner, and Billy is the raw material that boils easily—but for some reason hidden even from that inner self which is forever hearing unexpected calls and challenges, immediately I felt mad to go to Pæstum.

“Yes,” said Jack, from his perennial desire to challenge everybody to “come on” whither he is going, “yes, come on to Pæstum. That’ll be Thursday. We make it from La Cava.”

I knew Cava of the Tyrrhenians, all blue mountain and silent valley and hills and hollow distances and balconies moonlighted. And now it was full moon, and my merciless fancy pictured me Julia in the sea of it, and Jack—commonplace Jack, yet he was young!—he adoring her. I would have none of Cava. But Pæstum was still drawing me; it had me with an iron grip.

“We’re doomed to Pæstum because Julia wants it,” said Jack fondly, with the husband’s young pride of being under dominion. “Think it over, Jule. It’s as full of malaria as it can stick. Come on to Capri with Olmstead, and I’ll give you a black pearl.”

“I’m sorry,” said Julia, in her dear voice pierced with a thrill of something I had never heard in it—resistance, maybe, not of him but for the sake of what she was obliged to do. “I have to go there.”

“Have to, child? Why have you?”

I looked at her and wondered why: not from wilfulness, for that wasn’t in her, but for some reason

so rigid that not only could she not permit it to be withstood, but she herself, from its unknown power, could not withstand it. Now the fair territory of her face was unfeignedly perplexed.

"I don't know," she owned. "I have to go, that's all. I know I have to."

"Gammon," said Jack, still fondly. If it had been less than a lover's acquiescent pride I couldn't have suffered him. "What if we let you go alone?"

"I should have to, then," she said, in the same serious wistfulness of wonder. "I can't bear to be so obstinate; but truly I've got to go."

Jack laughed. He liked her sudden tyranny, and took her hand and swung it back and forth.

"All right then," said he, "we've got to go. Olmstead, how about you? Can't you reconsider?"

"Assuredly," I said, with no volition, it seemed to me afterward, to say that particular thing. "I've got to go, too. I'll meet you there."

So we looked out times and trains and made our final pact. I had privately decided that, for all my mythical engagement at Capri, I should probably stay on at Naples up to the point of being due at Pæstum—for due there I was, I solemnly knew, for other reason than that I had vowed to meet the lately married there. But what the reason was, I could no more say than Julia could, of hers. Only there was a reason.

The few days passed, and I occupied them as well as I could for thinking of the moon at Cava, in running back over my own life, meagre though it was of

incident, to see, once for all, whether I could have made it different. I didn't find that I could. At every point where other men score, in the brave crisis, the big distances, I had slipped a cog. When a man was needed at the vital spot, I simply couldn't be there. When life demanded testimony of me, I might have it to offer, but court was never sitting that day. The whole thing was consistent. It had happened to me over and over. It wasn't that I was faint-hearted and weak-backed, or that my legs were not strong enough to make a pace. I was becalmed in some zone of the soul. Information never reached me. Boats couldn't get into my latitude with the news of the battles that were going to be, or the great treaties that would prevent my striking futile blows for a quarrel that was lost. It had all been like a retribution for some misdeed of mine. I felt that strongly, for I believed in the justice that dogs us like a loving hound, and I knew it was part of the beneficent scheme of things that if we are hit over the head, it is that we have at some time bought the blow. Only, how had I deserved precisely this? Why was I "come-tardy-of" in all the games of life? How had it been managed that I shouldn't find Julia three months before the fresh-colored Jack brought his conquering cravats into the field? I hadn't even had a chance—and why? I felt it would help me for the home stretch, which had, after all, to be run with ardor, even if to a decreed ignominy, to know.

The morning came, and all fell out as we had said.

We met at Pæstum station, the five of us, they with little canvas bags of luncheon from the paternal Hotel de Londres, an extra portion for me. There was not a single tourist beside ourselves—"a single, blooming tourist," Billy said—and the sky was Italian blue, and a light wind moving to welcome us, when between dry fields where wild larkspur bloomed we walked toward the temple—and I, by what seemed some fated chance, walked with Julia, while Jack leaped the low walls to bring her larkspur and crowd it into her hands. She was silent, and I seemed to know it was because the moment, the day, meant something to her nobody could share—nobody but me, perhaps, for I, too, knew it meant tremendously. And then we were in face of the great yellow-pillared splendor, and we dared to enter and wander up and down its ruined aisles. The gods were there, I knew perfectly well, and said so; but I chanced to say it was Apollo, for I heard him, and Mrs. Billy kept chirping:

"But why do you say Apollo, Mr. Olmstead, when this is the Temple of Neptune? Don't you know it's the Temple of Neptune, Mr. Olmstead? Isn't it Neptune you mean?"

And then I got meek and patient because there was no other way of hushing her, and said, "Yes, I did mean Neptune." But about this time we all began to notice Julia. She had stayed apart from us, in our wandering up and down, our profane feet where priests had ministered, and now she was hurrying back and forth, peering out between col-

umns, even so far as the line of distant saline blue, and her face had piteously changed. It was gray-pale and her eyes were black and anguished. Her husband saw it about as soon as I did, and started for her over grassy gulfs between the slabs. But when he would have touched her, she waved him off. She almost pushed him.

"What is it, darling?" I heard him say, and she looked so unfriended that I was glad the tender word was ready for her. "Lost something?"

She started and looked at him, not, I could have sworn, knowing him at all, and then put both her hands to her head in an unaffected gesture of wild perplexity.

"I don't know," she said. "I don't know." And then, "Where is the ship?"

He took her by the arm and led her along perforce and made her sit.

"She feels the heat," I heard him say to Mrs. Billy who was staring. "Get the apollinaris, Bill. Wet a handkerchief in it, somebody."

But there was really no heat to feel. The little breeze was still doing its kindest for us. Julia laughed out now. Her color had come back as if, having got into another part of the temple, she had escaped an especial territory of influence.

"What are you giving me apollinaris for?" she asked. "Jack, you're dripping that handkerchief over Mrs. Billy's dress. Want it on my head? Of course I don't want a great wet dab on my head! Come, let's read the guide-book and then have luncheon."

So we avoided looking at one another, the rest of us, and went rather hastily into activities, as if we had witnessed some special madness that had blessedly passed, and must never be thought of any more. And in due time we had our luncheon, and fed the lean dogs that came, evidently by habit, to yearn for bits, and then it was in the air that the Temple of Ceres must be visited, and everybody, well primed by Jack's conscientious perorations from the guide-book, rose to go. All but me, and, for a moment, all but Julia.

"Come, come," said Jack to her. It was impatient, but the impatience of a solicitude most tender. "Get a move on, missus. The day's 'most over."

She shook her head. The puzzled look had come back to her.

"I don't believe I can," she said, and she spoke with some difficulty, as they do who have imperfectly rehearsed their subject-matter. "I might be late."

He gave her arm a little shake.

"Come, come, dear," said he. "You're not going to worry me again?"

That seemed to bring her back with a wrench to what we are pleased to call reasonableness, and she laughed and turned with him obediently enough. They were midway out of the temple, all of them, when they remembered me.

"Come along, Olmstead," Jack threw back at me. He was entirely good-natured now he had his own

special prize under convoy. "You mustn't keep Ceres waiting. They don't like it."

"I'm not going," I said. "I'll take a nap. See you at the train."

At that, Julia, his wife, stopped short and gave me that puzzled but now almost recognizing look; but he reminded her by a touch on the arm, and she went on with him, patient, I could see, and droopingly. And Billy tossed me a cigar, and Mrs. Billy shook her parasol at me, and they were gone, and had left me to the oblivion I candidly knew I wanted. I put my head back on the calm old pillar—I was conscious of wishing I were as old, so that I could perhaps be as indifferent—and shut my eyes. I was horribly tired, and at the same time most unbearably excited with it all. With what? I didn't know. Was this panic? Was I Pan-struck, as one might well be on this ground of colossal shadowy deities? I felt that I was nervous as a green girl, and threw all sorts of obloquy at my senile state for admitting such a thing. And I kept my eyes shut to rest them from the vision of things seen, and so they stayed until I heard a voice. It was a woman's voice, a voice I could have sworn was Julia's, and it spoke my name. Now I am not going to tell what my name is, because it is Greek, and old, and funny when I sign it to a reply to a dinner invitation, though it does very well for a scholar who has dry conclusions to make upon living facts. My father was a scholar, and he gave it to me, and perhaps for that reason, perhaps for some unknown other, I have always been

content with it. I have had, indeed, connected with it, a certain inevitable feeling I can't describe, as if nothing else could ever possibly have been my name. But when I opened my eyes I saw it could not have been I who was called. The tourists indeed were upon me, a man and a woman, both young, and they walked together outside the temple, and talked together with a trouble and haste I could hardly forbear to share, even by an eye-beam, it was in itself so passionate. It seemed to draw lesser intelligences to it, as the sun compels the earth. I thought I knew who they were, this from their costume. They were in white, the flowing robes of an ancient time, and I guessed at once that they were out of a troupe of actors of classical Greek plays, who had been going about London and Paris, during my stay there, in the free beauty of their borrowed dress. But I began to hear them speak, and took no shame in listening. I seemed, indeed, to be there to listen, to share, to partake with them of the tragic imminence of their fate. They spoke rapidly, but in the melody of a majestic tongue which was not mine. Yet, though I could not that night transcribe a word of it, I followed it with the ease of a leaf on a flowing river. She was entreating him, this man of my name, to undo some irrevocable deed. What it was I could not at first determine. Then, from her heart-broken reproaches, and his hurlings back of the "No!" that seemed inevitable, I gradually gathered knowledge. He had sold the state's secret—some secret—he had been paid by the enemy—some enemy

—and what he had been paid was to enrich him to the point of seizing her from the arms of the hated lover she was decreed to, and fleeing with her in the enemy's ship. And the ship was out there across the blue line.

But the girl would not go. She was adjuring him, in the name of all the gods, to deliver himself up to justice, to inevitable death. Here was where she had appointed their meeting, here by the sacred temple, here where their whisperings might be heard, the better that they should, that priests and gods combined might slay them both and so hasten his expiation. As they walked back and forth in the sunlight, and once she set her foot unconsciously on a snake and I saw it did not move even by a tremor of its shining length, my eyes dwelt with a love and pity I cannot measure upon the filleted gold of her small head. I seemed to partake with her of anguish lest he fail, yet to know it was a foregone fate, and my sadness settled into the acquiescence of despair. He desired nothing but to save her, yet he would not save them both, as they do who play for honors, by giving up himself. And as if I were in his skin I saw why. He loved her too fervidly, too passionately, as earth is tempting, forcing, pushing us to love, and as the big law we only now and then catch a glimpse of, will not have us. And curiously from that far time, from the misty gates of it, my mind leaped with a throb, a vault down the centuries, to the cavalier who made an immortal discovery and wrote it in immortal words:

I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
Loved I not Honor more.

This, in substance, she represented to him in the passion of her noble phrases, unconsidered, born like tears out of a breaking heart. She was his dearest, she said, she thanked the gods, but nevertheless the gods themselves must be still dearer to him, they and the state. What was it compared with the dishonor he had bought that her poor body should be stained by the mastery of a hated spouse? At that he cried aloud, and she hushed him while my mind had time to flash aside to another mandate made for perpetuity concerning them that kill the body and have not power to kill the soul. Her voice continued in its lyric rise and fall. There was no help for either of them, she told him, he in his present disaster and she before her coming slavery, no help save death, and that might happily be now. But all the same, while the bright rapiers of their argument were glancing, I knew he would not yield: that they were to be discovered, that since she must not go with him, he would snatch at her with the force of love run wild, and, trusting in the ship, resolve in his madness to bear her to it across the parching leagues. That she would cry out to the gods to save them and they would be saved—he by the knife at his throat and she to sink into so ill a mind that no man would take her to him with her bright beauty faded.

All this I seemed indubitably and with a high sadness to know, and athwart the web of it, like some-

thing sharply remembered, I heard other voices, insistently familiar ones of the common day. Some one was calling, Jack, Billy and Mrs. Billy, she waving her parasol up and down, in a pump-handle fashion, across the bright vista through which they ran. Did they shock the other visitants to a scene beloved and throw them out of the aura where they were for the moment visible? Had the time been preëminently ripe and right that they—these two beautiful young beings—had returned for a fleeting hour of a day no longer existent, to play their parts again in faithful rigor to a vanished past, or had I, incalculably endowed, seen but the picture of them, woven for all time into the waving tapestry of the air? However it was, they were gone, not of a sudden, not either walking away or vanishing, but in some quite familiar and convincing fashion, as if I had seen beautiful young lovers go thus, as conclusively as if it were through a gate. And at the instant that I felt they were gone, and knew myself to be in some way the richer, the more complete for having seen them, I heard a cry—not from those three chorusing on behind, but a light, hurried call in a voice I knew. Yet never had I heard it so moved, so jubilant, so full of life. And as I turned to it, she came—Julia came, flying. Her face was pink like dawn, and her glad eyes hailed me. She made no hesitant pause or pretense that it was anything but me and what I stood for she had come to find. Both hands out, she rushed to me, and I with my two hands received her. Standing so,

palm to palm, she looked up in my face, one glad smile of recognition. So might the girl I had just seen have looked at her lover if she had, instead of dooming him to death, beckoned him to life with her.

"Am I too late?" she was imploring me, yet with the sweetest certainty that she was not. "Oh, don't tell me I'm too late!"

"No, no," I answered her, worship on my lips, in my eyes, I felt, as in my heart. "No. I was here. I saw them. What difference whether it was you or I?"

"What difference!" she echoed out of a deep-breathed, heavenly tranquillity of happiness. "Oh, what difference!" Then she looked at me for a long minute, as if she saw behind my lean old face what jocund youth I should have been the last to understand, but not to believe. I knew and believed it all. "It is the last now," she said. She was growing fragmentary, like one recalled to an existence not yet comprehended, and only able to stay in it for a minute, and now, the minute over, fading out of it as the two others had faded to my eyes. But I understood. The last parting, she had meant to say. "Next time"—she stammered sweetly, in her lovely hesitancy, like a child of heaven learning the new language and as yet imperfect in it. And then I saw her—the one who had looked at me, who had spoken, who had known the hour was nearly accomplished, and next time, in whatever age and whatever star, would see the bridegroom claim his bride—I saw her fading out into Julia Dove, the young mate of Jack, who was anxiously hailing her

as he ran: for she, in that wonder of predestined flight, had outstripped them all. And I did not care. I did not care that she was to return with him to moonlight and bells at Cava, for that, too, must be mysteriously accomplished. He was beside her now, and I dropped her hands. She looked down at them, as I did it, surprised a little, it seemed, to know why I had been holding them.

"What is it?" Jack was insisting, out of a rage of anxious love. "What in thunder is it, dear?"

Mrs. Billy came up, panting and creaking, and her parasol might have dented the sacred stones, so did she punctuate her haste.

"What is what, dear?" Julia echoed, lightly and most honestly. "Did I hurry? I was bidding Mr. Olmstead good-by."

"Come along then," said Jack, mopping his smooth young brow, and almost a little fractious at having been fretted into more perplexities. "That train will be in in about three minutes and a half. Come along, Olmstead."

"No," said I. "I'm not going."

I felt light-headed, drunk with the delirium and the certainty of it.

"Not going? You won't get anywhere tonight."

"I don't want to," said I. "I'm somewhere now. There'll be some kind of a little hostelry."

"Don't be a fool, man," said Billy, and Mrs. Billy shrieked "Malaria!" italicising with her parasol.

"Well, there's a minute gone, and we can't stop here," said Jack, and I didn't blame him. One

doesn't lightly subject wives to even a mythical malaria. "Come on, Olmstead. We're off."

Julia turned willingly and obediently with him; but at ten paces she stopped. She ran back toward me. The other look fled into her face. "Don't you smell them," she cried. "Roses!"

"Yes," I said, afire with my exultation, and again my mind challenged my own century and found the right word from another man's pen: "'Roses from Pæstan rosaries!'"

"Next time"—she faltered, as if she herself least of all understood what she might be saying. The look had faded.

"Julia! Julia!" Jack was calling, and Mrs. Billy piped me out one more warning:

"Malaria, Mr. Olmstead! Remember!"

But I stood there happier, younger, more at peace than anything, I believed, on earth. I could think of but one word to call: the word any man would be likeliest to leave in the keeping of his dearest, if they were to be parted for a lifetime or two. Mrs. Billy thought it was her word; but it was Julia's, to her soul alone, though it meant no more to her, with the memory washed out of her face, than if a butterfly had settled for an instant on her gown, and she, flying with Jack, had had no eyes for it. I called it after them, and Mrs. Billy, thinking it the echo of her own, shook her parasol despairingly. Out of my kingdom of youth regained and love inalienably assured I called, and it rang splendidly:

"Remember!"

WAVES

It seemed to Jeffrey Wheelock and his wife, Anne, that their ridiculous apartment in New York had acquired a meaning and a distinction since Aunt Sybil came to visit them. She was a thin blonde aunt, something over sixty, with sparse auburn hair brought smoothly into spirals of curls behind her ears, a perennial smile, all benevolence, and a most childlike glance through the gold-bowed glasses of which she was so proud. She had earned them out of eggs and butter, and it exhilarated her to think how reckless she had been in eschewing a baser metal. Her ways were comfortable country ones, brought gaily into the heart of a city turmoil she admired, and there displayed with no faltering over their incongruity. In the two days of her visit, she had gone with Anne to a picture exhibition and a half dozen of the more spectacular shops (Anne anxiously selecting such pageantry as cost nothing), in the calmest surety that, if her cashmere shawl and her bonnet of another epoch inspired any remark, it could be only of a kindly tone.

At home she made hourly pictures, sitting by the window darning stockings that had been cast into the obscurity of a drawer where Anne never had time to go, and sewing buttons on with a swift regularity and a twirl of her thread about the base that

fascinated Jeff as much now in his mature estate as it had twenty years before, when he sat roasting his apple by the kitchen hearth. He began to think he had never fully estimated Aunt Sybil's decorative value. It seemed as if he might even build her into a play, or that he might have done it at an earlier moment when he had the enthusiasm attendant on untried desires, and before he had bitterly learned that the doors of the great tribunal of dramatic agent and potent manager swing rustily on their hinges.

But all this appreciation of Aunt Sybil's affectionate pleasure in being with them made only a secluded little retiring-room for the young couple's thought, a shady spot where they could drop in for a moment to rest upon old affections and loyalties, in the pauses of stolen consultation over their extreme and menacing poverty and their kind conspiracy to give Aunt Sybil a rousing good time until she should go back and tell the neighbors how splendidly Jeff was doing in New York.

It had been best to ask her now, because now they had the apartment, and even another month might find them unable to pay for it; and out of her long kindness Aunt Sybil had earned the right to an enduring picture of their worldly felicity before they settled down, in one room, to meals out of small bake-shops and tin cans.

This morning Jeff was out on one of his lorn quests after the ladylike head of a dramatic agency, who had written him enthusiastic praise of his melo-

drama, alternating with mysterious reasons for not landing it upon the great Mr. Nasmyth, the king of the managers.

Aunt Sybil laid down her work and slipped her glasses off to wipe them. She looked about the little sitting-room with its Winged Victory, at the other delusive wedding presents, each testifying to more ease than the young couple could possibly live up to, and said, with great satisfaction:

"Well, you certain are fixed complete."

Anne thought of the Victory swinging outside the window on its way into a house with stairs too narrow for its advent, fancied the stiff Japanese embroidery near neighbor to a kerosene-stove, and giggled.

"We like it," she said speciously.

"Some said"—Aunt Sybil went on sewing, and stated the case candidly, "some of 'em at home said Jeff was ravin' crazy to give up school-keepin' to write plays. Our minister said, 'Why don't he write his plays first, nights and so, and when he's had one took, then burn his bridges?'"

"O wise young judge!" murmured Anne irrepressibly.

"What d'you say, dear?" inquired Aunt Sybil, glancing up.

"That might be the way for some," Anne hedged.

"Not for anybody that could do it and knew he could. So I says, dear. And I wrote to the minister last night. 'They're as snug as ever you see,' says I. 'Got 'em a nice little tenement, everything

complete. And Jeff's got his play done, and it's in somebody's hands.' Who is it that's got it, dear?"

"Miss Belton has it."

"Yes. Miss Belton. I'll remember it so's I can tell 'em when I get home. When do the royalties begin, dear?"

"Plays are usually brought out at the beginning of the season," Anne conceded miserably.

"Next fall? Then that's when the royalties'll begin. My! You could have knocked me down first time I read in the paper how much them royalties mount up to."

"It's a good business," said Anne.

"I guess so. Well, it's all come out better'n anybody had reason to hope. There was a month or two, when Jeff first give up his place, I worried considerable. I used to lay awake nights. That was before I found out about the waves."

"Waves, Aunt Sybil?"

"Yes. There was a lecturer to the hall. He told us there was waves. He said, you just think things are goin' to be good and they are good. If you think they'll be bad, why so 't'll be. When we think, dear, we kinder make waves in the air——"

"Thought-waves?"

"I dunno. I didn't ketch exactly what they were. Only they were waves. And they keep on and on, and mebbe they wash down some things and build up others. I dunno exactly how it is; but anyway it's your thought that makes 'em, and there's nothin' they can't do."

"There's Jeff."

Aunt Sybil was not listening. Her ears were attuned to the murmuring of subtle influences on far-off shores. "I've tried it, dear," she said. "I know."

"The waves?" Anne was out of her chair, poised for a flight to the hall, to meet Jeff and give him the relief of telling his news quickly.

"Yes. When I got kinder struck up over Jeff's givin' up his business and takin' to plays, I says to myself: 'Well, if there's waves, I'll make 'em.' So instead of worryin' I'd say—I guess a hundred times a day I said it—'Now there's Jeff and Anne—Jeff's writin' the best play ever anybody see, and there's money comin' to 'em.' Bymeby I could see it rollin' in. It was a kind of a stream, all gold, and the waves was washin' it along."

Anne halted in the doorway. Tears were in her eyes. "Did you, Aunt Sybil?" she said. Then she met Jeff in the hall. "What is it?" she asked. "Did you see her?"

He drew her toward their bedroom and, inside it, shut the door. His step, faltering out failure, had prepared her for his face. He threw off his hat and passed a hand over his forehead. He looked haggard.

"No," he said. "I didn't see her. 'Miss Belton was out.' There's no such thing as a visible Miss Belton. Had they tried to place my play? The girl was sure Miss Belton had made every effort. I said I'd take it with me. She couldn't find it, Anne.

They'd actually pigeonholed it so effectually it couldn't be found."

"They did find it?"

"Yes, after it was apparent I meant to sit there till the day after to-morrow. Yes, she found it, in the same wrapper I sent it in, untouched, fresh as paint. It hadn't been read."

"You took it?"

"Oh, yes, I took it."

"Where is it?"

"I met Jessie Horton on the way back, and she got it away from me."

Anne gave his shoulder a little shake. "Got it away from you, Jeff? Don't be crazy."

"I told her what I'd done," he went on, as if it were a dull story, yet necessarily to be rehearsed. "She put me up to one or two things I'd better have known earlier. She thought I was rather green, Jessie did, to expect the girls at Belton's to hunt up a play unless I greased the wheels. A five-dollar bill does wonders. Ten works a miracle."

"Surely not!"

"So she said. Anyhow, I hadn't any ten dollars to spend that way, nor five, nor one. She told me something else. Belton couldn't show my play, nor any play, to Nasmyth. They've quarreled."

"Then show it to Nasmyth yourself!"

"You're raving foolish, Anne. How am I going to get at him? I'm one of forty thousand suppliants. Jessie said the same thing. Then she said, 'Send it to an actor.' I had sent it, I told her, to half a dozen

already. They lose 'em in country hotels on the road. They take 'em for shaving-papers and toss 'em out of car-windows. It's a bottomless abyss. The poor devil of a writer might as well go down in a diving-bell as try to plumb it."

"What did she say to that?"

"I don't know." He mused miserably. "Anyhow, she's got the play. She's going to read it."

"Jessie Horton! Jessie can paint miniatures. She can't boost a play."

"She's going to have in a dozen or so, artists of low degree, and read the play to them. I think she has a vague idea they may know some fledgling newspaper man. It's all she can do, she says. It may start a ripple."

"Jessie's kind of ripple won't get anywhere."

"Maybe not. But she's a brick."

"Oh, yes, Jessie's a brick. When is the reading to be?"

"Next Wednesday, in the studio."

"Why don't you read it yourself?"

"She wanted me to. I wouldn't. I haven't the voice—nor the heart."

"It'll be one more thing to take Aunt Sybil to," said Anne thriftily. "She'll think it's one of her waves."

"Her what?"

Anne set forth the theory of waves; their cares fell from them, and they hung upon each other and went into spasms of foolish laughter. They sped in to Aunt Sybil on the tide of it, and she looked benevo-

lently up at them, thinking how good it is to be young and clever and prospectively rich.

At luncheon, Anne announced to her with the air of proclaiming something inconceivable, that Jeff's play was to be read. Jessie Horton would read it.

"She the one that's goin' to act in it?" inquired Aunt Sybil.

Jeff allowed Anne to meet all these searchers. She was more facile—not less truthful, but better adapted to skirt upon the edges of truth and take a little flutter in it often enough to come up with a sparkle on her wings.

"No," said Anne, with composure. "She's an artist. She thinks it well to have the play known more or less before it's acted."

"Certain!" agreed Aunt Sybil. "Well, I should admire to go."

"We may not think the play as good as it really is," Anne felt obliged to warn her. "Jessie doesn't read particularly well. It wouldn't be at all like having an actress do it, for example. You mustn't be disappointed."

"I should kinder thought they'd got an actress," remarked Aunt Sybil. "They all busy at this season o' the year?"

"Pretty busy," returned Anne, in haste. "More tea, Aunt Sybil? Well, maybe Jessie can read better than we fear."

"We'll think she reads complete," said Aunt Sybil, "the best that ever was. Then it'll all come out right. That's the waves, you know."

The play was to be read at three in the afternoon, and on the morning of that Wednesday Jeff and Anne made careful selection among their bric-à-brac, and carried most of the portable articles over to the studio. This was a futile elaboration, yet they had a somber pleasure in it. It was only gracious in them to respond to Jessie with the cheerful implication that the day meant as much to them as she had generously intended. But after they had done hard service in the studio for two hours, draped the chair on the model throne, hung tapestries, and gloomily regarded the best vantage points for jugs and screens, their hearts fell dismally. Jeff could have cursed the silly ending of a venture whereon he had so valiantly embarked.

Unassailable, there towered in his mind the certainty that he had written a good play. It might even be great. That, after all, was for the sovereign people to declare. But that it was warm with youth and high romance, firm of workmanship, just in conclusion, he knew. And to this market had it come: the judgment of a small circle from another art, men whose most honest intent could never hoist it a step on the legitimate way.

At twelve o'clock he stood on the pavement again, with Anne.

"Car?" he offered.

She shook her head. "No, I must have a breath and get rid of my cobwebs before I see Aunt Sybil."

"Poor Aunt Sybil!"

"Poor us! Aunt Sybil's all right. By the time

we're bankrupt she'll have had her visit and gone placidly home. Shall we apply at a teacher's agency?"

"It's a bad time of year," said Jeff quietly.

She looked at him. The line of his mouth made a savage curve, and as she had traced every step of the way to this inglorious conclusion, so now she knew the present smart. Jeff was not suffering because they were poor and saw every prospect of a barer poverty. It was because he loved his play and he believed in it. This was the highest conception he had of action, the best he knew of poetry. Nobody had seen in it what he had tried to put there, and his headlong temperament told him nobody ever would see it. Out of her sorrow for him, her words were bitter.

They went on in silence, and suddenly, pierced by the irony of fortune, she laughed. "Why, Jeff," said she, "the waves!"

He was far away, rebelliously seeking out the causes of things. "The waves?"

"Aunt Sybil's. We're to think palaces, and houses will sprout into turrets. We're to think diamonds, and the coal-bin will glitter. Let's play that way. It's turned Aunt Sybil into a tight-rope optimist. There she goes, morning, noon and night, in her spangled petticoat, balancing her stick and smiling at the audience, and saying it's all coming out right because she thinks so."

"We can't play that game," said Jeff absently. "We're of the blood of Thomas, the Doubter."

"But play, child, play! Get a laugh out of it."

"Ay, ay, sir! You begin."

"We're to assume that everything's at the top notch. I begin to see how exhilarating it might be—a sort of transcendental, blameless way of getting drunk. We need it, Jeff. We're depleted by realities. Here's a table set—with nothing on it. Pour the wine."

Jeff roused himself.

"Very well," said he. "The waves! Your play. I'll come in when I can."

At Twenty-third Street a labor procession was crossing and they were immediately ensnared in a swirling crowd. There was prospect of their waiting some time for the knot to untangle, and Anne took her hand from his arm where she had laid it, country-fashion. She turned upon him in the pleasure of an evident surprise.

"Why, Mr. Wheelock," she interjected brightly. "Are you really in town?"

Jeff took off his hat with as gallant an abandon as the throng, elbow to tight elbow, would allow.

"Delighted to see you," he answered in kind. "And you of all people! How well you are looking!"

"You, too! on the top wave, aren't you?"

"The tip of the top," said Jeff merrily. "Don't look at my old clo'. I'm perennially shabby nowadays. Can't get time to hunt up my tailor."

"What's this I hear about a play?"

The crowd surged a little, and they settled into place. Jeff got a grip of her underarm to steady

her. Anne hated mobs. They made her panicky; and he began gaily to defend her from guessing how thick humanity was about them.

"Oh, the play! It's like a fairy-story. I've written a melodrama, and they're simply fighting for it."

"Nasmyth? The great Nasmyth?"

"No. That's the joke. The great Nasmyth isn't in it. He doesn't even know about it. Miss Belton has absolutely forbidden a whisper in his direction."

"She wants it?"

"Precisely. For the other side."

"Will they do as well for you as Nasmyth?"

Jeff cocked his head, and tried to hold her eye as the crowd thickened.

"As well!" he trumpeted, with bravado. "Why, my dear friend, I'm made. I've only to sit down now and sign checks. Though I haven't accepted, mind you."

"But you will?"

"Oh, undoubtedly! We sign the contract tomorrow. Meanwhile, the play's to be read this afternoon."

"Really? Might I hear it?"

"Delighted. Three o'clock, at Flaxman Studios." His quick eye had caught a rift in the crowd. "Scoot, Anne," he said, in her ear. "That way; I'll keep hold of you." His hands on her waist, he got her through the press, and after a breathless minute they were looking back from a safe curb.

"Heavens!" breathed Anne. "I should have fainted if I'd known. I thought it was five deep. It's a hundred."

He laughed. "What you don't know never hurts you. Waves, Anne, waves!"

They went home to luncheon, which Aunt Sybil benevolently had ready, their young spirits back again, and they laughed all through the meal.

At five minutes before three, twenty people were seated comfortably in Jessie Horton's studio. The candles were lighted. Mirrors reflected shining brasses and dull tapestries. It all had a look of subdued gaiety and importance, as if a great deal of trouble had been taken to make fit surroundings for something worthy of applause. Jeff, looking about him, thought with bitterness that here was a simulation, in little, of the goal he had meant to touch. Here was his beautiful play. Here was a handful of people to listen to it. But in a moment the candles would be out, the bric-à-brac returned to its niche, the studio would be the scene of Jessie's solitary supper, and the play no step nearer to its goal.

Aunt Sybil, in her embroidered crêpe shawl, her little curls tighter than eye could believe from the rigorous pains with which she had constructed them, sat in the front row close by the model throne. She had turned a beaming face upon Anne, haggard at her side—Anne for whom even this reading of the beloved lines meant agony, lest some ear or mind should be holden to their beauty.

Anne smiled faintly in answer. She could inter-

pret the look. They were to hope for the best, imagine and will the best. There were to be waves. Jessie, manuscript in hand, was about to mount the platform. At that moment Anne turned to Jeff, whispering:

"Who is that man? There, at the doorway. He was close by us this morning in the crowd."

Jeff looked. A tall blond man in a fur-lined coat stood just inside the door, holding his hat rather deferentially, as if he begged the privilege of coming in. Jeff's breath quickened while his heart pounded.

"My God! that's Nasmyth himself!"

Nobody saw the man but these two. Now it appeared that Jessie's skirt had caught on a tack and somebody was loosening it solicitously. Nasmyth still stood there waiting to be asked in. Jeff, not formulating what he meant to do, was on his feet and had taken a stride over the corner of the throne. At Jessie's elbow he bent, and while the other man laboriously freed the lace, whispered in her ear:

"Go and ask him in."

"Who?" said Jessie, coming to her feet, and giving her liberated skirt a shake.

"There in the doorway. Nasmyth—can't you see? Ask him in. Give him a seat. I'll read."

He pulled the manuscript from her hand, and Jessie turned automatically, saw Nasmyth, and walked over to him. Jeff, on the platform, first act in hand, felt the ripple of surprise about him, and knew, with the prescience that had become in that

instant the product of his entire bodily sense and not of vision alone, that she was giving Nasmyth a seat. Then he heard his own voice, clear and as decisive as the little jacks that strike piano keys, announcing:

“Time, the present. Place, a ranch in Montana.”

From that moment he read in a waking trance and read to Nasmyth. The man seemed to be the autocrat of a small yet infinitely desirable world, and Jeff had brought his trained puppets to be judged as to their fitness for living in that world and making merry there. While his voice read, his mind kept up a running argument to the man, always in the person of the puppets themselves.

“Hear us,” it kept saying. “Only hear us. Let us prove we have some blood in us and can make your houses laugh and cry. Listen to us! Listen!”

The play went on, and with it the argument in the playwright’s mind. Jeff did not once look at Nasmyth. Nor did he glance at his own two dear women sitting down there in front—Anne, he knew, with excitement straining her face, and Aunt Sybil with the smile that signified how hard she was whipping up the waves. He looked over them all and threw his voice into the shadows at their back. It might have been the auditorium, and he and his puppets, on a lighted stage, still continuing that grave and steady plea to be heard, only to be heard.

The first act was over, and with only an interval for a breath he had begun the next. Now he was conscious of a fear—lest Nasmyth should go out. If

Nasmyth went out he felt sure something would break. The scene would dissolve. His own voice would cease, and he would go crashing down among what seemed to be chairs and listening people. Then he began to reason with himself, and find arguments for speeding through it calmly. This was the culmination of the months of work on the play and the strain of his heart-sickness over it. Nothing would be more likely than his breaking down; yet he must avoid that because it would frighten Anne and horrify Aunt Sybil.

But Nasmyth simply must not go out. He thought of reading faster, lest Nasmyth should need to take a train, and then decided that, for some reason unknown to him, it was safer to keep on at this measured pace. Some one came up and put a glass of water at his hand. He felt a momentary impatience that any one could think of fortifying him by obvious means for such a task as this. Then he longed for the water inordinately, but dared not drink, lest, in the pause, Nasmyth should go out.

Act two was ended. He marshaled his fagged puppets and read on through acts three and four. When he had finished, he gathered up the manuscript from the little table, and rolled it mechanically. The studio looked rather dark, and he heard Anne saying, in a high, artificial voice:

"Do you think so? I shall tell him. Thank you so much." But as for him, he had stepped down from the model throne and he was face to face with Nasmyth.

"Have you sold your rights?" the great man asked, without prologue.

"No," he heard himself answering in his clear reading voice, a voice he hardly knew he had.

"I want it. Can you come round to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"At ten?"

"At ten."

"Better say nine. Somebody else has an option on it, I understand." Jeff felt himself coming awake. His brilliant certainties, builded on a joke, collapsed.

"Nobody's got an option on it," he said miserably. Hot tears came into his eyes and hurt and startled him. "You overheard us. We were playing fool."

For that the great man did not care.

"It's a good play," he said. "That is, it has possibilities. A few changes, and we can bring 'em out." Then he melted, and Jeff could see that he was remembering the puppets and their message of life and love. "It's a corker," said Nasmyth. "Bring it along. Now I must apologize to the lady for butting in."

There was tea, and Jeff went home with his womenfolk, one on each side. He looked straight ahead into the radiant future. Anne did not speak because she was in awe at the bigness of Fate. Aunt Sybil was absorbed in the pageant of the streets. When they were at home, Jeff sat down and put his head in his hands.

"Lawzy!" said Aunt Sybil, "you're all beat out. Well, 'twas quite a spell to read right along."

"Yes," said Anne hastily her hand on his shoulder, "he's 'beat out.'"

There was very little said in the house that night. It seemed to Anne and Jeff that something was crystallizing, and they must be careful not even to disturb the air. Aunt Sybil, judging, as she often cheerfully did, from a set of general precepts she had brought with her, that they must have mutual confidences to make, went to bed early.

When she came out to breakfast, Jeff was gone. Anne had agreed with him that it was best for him to walk to his appointment, and get himself into some kind of shape. All that forenoon Anne, with the face of a martyr, sat by while Aunt Sybil rocked and sewed. Once she broke down.

"O, Aunt Sybil!" she moaned, "keep your mind on Jeff. Don't take it off an instant. Wish him luck, just luck!"

Aunt Sybil asked no questions.

"Law, child!" said she, "my mind's mostly on Jeff, when it ain't on both of you together. Them waves are runnin' mountain-high."

At twelve he came. He was pale, but his eyes shone as they had the first time Anne had told him she "liked him very much." He threw a long envelope into her lap.

"There it is," he said huskily. "We begin rehearsals next week. And I'm to adapt a thing from the French and get five hundred down. Aunt Sybil, light of my soul, do you want a diamond sunburst, or a horse and buggy—or only a kiss?"

THE FLAGS ON THE TOWER

NEAL DIXWELL, in the one train a day that went down to Paradise Cove now that the fall weather was on and summer residents had fled, felt an agreeable sense of adventure. It was his own house he was going to, where his wife had chosen to stay later than usual, even though he had been called to town, and the trip through marshes, a bewilderment of brilliant brown grass and blue water, was enough to gainsay the intelligence of anyone who could consent to forego it while it kept up to such a pitch. It was a route Dixwell had taken for years through the summer, yet to-day it was different, not only from the season's change, but under the reflection of his own mood. Everything was diversified like the bars in the spectrum, though in an unfamiliar order. This was as memory talked to him, like a sad yet inexorably exact whisperer at his ear. There was the intense violet of the time when he had bought the house and taken Amy there to spend their first married summer. It had continued violet of a sort for a few years after that. At least, if it had not, his eyes, accustomed to violet, had seen what they looked for. Then he had blinked them open, because it had surely faded. After that it had been rather a garish red, while they tried to bring other people into their atmosphere, to look on, to admire,

and perhaps, by a delicate measure of applause, convince them that they were happy, after all. Then even this had changed into a hard hue that had no beauty in it, yet was warranted to wear. But it was not wearing. It had ugly splotches, and he was going down now to show the splotches to Amy, to ask her if she saw them as clearly as he did, and if they mightn't as well wash the whole thing out and not pretend to seeing any color at all.

Hitherto, as to this fading of the hues of youth, they had kept a well-bred reticence. Even to himself he had not owned Amy's share in the threadbare condition of the web. He had said that he was growing old, though not yet fifty, that life was made that way, and that you couldn't possibly expect an elderly dusk to fulfil the promise of a bird-haunted dawn. Yet now, within a few days, since he had been alone at the town house taking a ruthless look over their bankrupt stock, he owned of necessity, since he had determined to be honest at last, that Amy, as well as he and the course of the years, must bear the responsibility of their failure. Amy was there in the picture that illustrated their common fall, and at last she must accept her share of culpability.

As the train took him through the yellowed marshes at a not too hurried pace—for it was a considerate train, willing to deposit milk cans and morning papers—he asked himself, while his eyes absently recorded the beauty of bright-blue inlets with leaning boats at rest in them and the rich, fringing border

of grass, exactly what his quarrel was with life. Taken in the large, it was perhaps that the appearance of things had deceived him deliberately and with purpose. Nature had wanted to get something out of him—his total of contribution in response to her warm promise of emolument—and when he had given all that was in him she had told him:

“Perhaps that’s all you can do. I can’t stop to explain why the rewards I offered you are not precisely in proportion to your anticipation. I’ve got to shake my banners before somebody else younger than you are. That’s all.”

Even his book-writing, productive as it had been of praise, merely made him a little sick when he dared confront its gathered fruits. He had aimed at the ineffable, the word beyond, and he had accomplished nothing more than the obvious that people were eager to praise—when they could entice him to teas and author’s readings. He really had had the vision once. He knew that ecstasy of expression which is as real as the religious rapture, the leap into the air for words as they pass in winged procession. And somehow he had succeeded only in a molded precision which the unlearned call style. And in place of his rapt contemplation of the divinity of things he had little more than a hurt wonder at finding them as they are. They had outlines now, surfaces. They did not swim like angelic forms in a transfiguring mist. The face of life, as it presented itself, had become intolerable, and at last he had determined, in what he clutched at as a last revulsion,

to escape, to go away in search once more of the spirit of things. And he would have to go alone. That was the point. Amy, with her massage and her rules for health, an ever-changing bulwark against the fear of growing old, was not to go with him. And that to-day he meant to tell her. She had become the symbol of the hateful outer world that is always trying to break in on the confines of the spirit. She was like the importunate person who insists on reading the newspaper to you when you want to lie on your back and look at glory overhead. Since his week alone in the town house he had begun to think he actually could not bear to set eyes on Amy again. But he had to, to tell her how far he was going away from her, perhaps not yet how far he had already gone.

When he alighted at the station, it was to be greeted by official solicitude because his own car had gone back to the house, having brought Mrs. Dixwell to the up-train. Dixwell passed over that with a little quizzical uplift of the brows. He had come, unannounced, to see Amy, and Amy, not knowing her cue, had, unannounced, gone up, not to see him, but, his prophetic soul suggested, a masseuse or manicure. Then there was, the station master mentioned with great interest in submitting all the facts in the case, the other lady who had come by motor from the Junction, and, not finding Mrs. Dixwell, was going back by train. There she was now.

She was an inconspicuous figure in brown, walking

at the end of the platform, and Dixwell at once made his way to her. At his near approach she turned, and he had time to see she was brown-eyed and grey-haired, with an indescribable hint of lightness and fitness for action, when her rather serious face, moved by some quick thought, lightened and bloomed abundantly. He had scarcely ever seen a face change into such radiant anticipation. Joy, it must be, that so transformed it, though why she should be stirred at sight of him he would have been puzzled to tell.

"Why," said she, "of all luck in the world!"

She was smiling at him, and he was indubitably expected to smile. But she could translate that hesitancy of his. She was not disheartened by it.

"You won't know me," she said, "though, of course, I know you. I've got you pasted all through my literary scrap-book. I'm only Margaret Whidden. Your wife—Amy—calls me Meg."

But meanwhile they were shaking hands. She had a firm, elastic clasp, and Dixwell was glad to encounter it, even if it brought no credentials. But now he could meet her on common ground.

"Of course," said he. "I don't even need to know you're Meg. You write stories. Do you suppose I haven't read 'em?"

She laughed and showed a desirable brand of teeth.

"Of course you haven't," she parried. "You might once or twice, to please Amy. But they're just little workaday stories. Not champagne, some-

body said of 'em once: just good, honest hard cider."

"But why aren't you up at the house?" he asked. "Staying the night? Waiting for Amy?"

"Can't stop. I haven't the time. I'm just back from Cuba, where I've been hunting some local color (hideous phrase!), and I felt I'd simply got to see Amy. It was a matter of self-preservation. Amy seemed to me the one person that could keep me alive."

Dixwell caught himself back from a candid expression of wonder. It was Amy who was keeping him from living, in any vivid sense, and here was somebody fleeing to her for succor.

"She's away for the day only," said he. "Of course you'll stay."

"No. Honestly, I have to be back to take ship again to-morrow. I'm not to see her. It wasn't meant. But I've seen you."

The naïve wonder of the tone smote him with some sort of remorse at being, by his own valuation, so little worth seeing.

"Why not come on to the house with me?" he offered. "You had the day for Amy. You could give it to me."

She was frankly delighted.

"I can't imagine anything so wonderful," she declared. "You see, I know you. So far as a body can through your books, I know you. And it's incredible to see you and hear you inviting plain Meg to eat up a whole day of your time."

"We can drive up the house," said he. "Or"—he put it even persuasively—"we could walk. Good for two miles?"

"Twenty," said she. "To the Pole, if you like, or through the Dark Continent."

"Then I'll telephone them to have lunch ready, and we'll take a trot."

He led her straight away from the station down to the cinder-strewn street where the coal-wharves are, and the fish-shops and pleasant runs where men were shocking clams and prowling cats sought out fish-heads. Abruptly this way of maritime trade turned yet more intimately toward the water, and they took a shingly path where the waves came lappingly. Then Dixwell picked up the unfinished thread of talk where he had dropped it.

"If you think I'm such great shakes, you needn't have waited so long to see me. Why didn't you come before?"

"Oh," said she, "I didn't want to see you." She was thinking of the water now as well as of the happy chance of meeting him. She could hardly keep her eyes away from the little boats at work offshore, but, in their beauty, so evidently at play. "That's why I telephoned to your house this morning to find out where Amy was, where you were. If you were down here, I wasn't coming."

"Why not?"

"Because you're such a splendid person. If I found you any less splendid than I thought, I simply couldn't bear it."

"Why not, again?"

"Oh, because it means so much to have an absolutely indestructible fire-proof hero."

"We're not heroes because we write books," said Dixwell shamefacedly.

"No, but you're pretty nice, you know. You've done the square thing right along. You haven't posed. You keep out of the limelight. You cut your hair and wear stiff collars. And you've made Amy happy."

This was rather sickening in view of the ordeal he had prepared for Amy.

"How do you know I've made Amy happy?" he asked miserably.

"It's easy to find out. I've seen people that know her. They tell me she doesn't change. She keeps her figure and her complexion and her hair. If that isn't the story of a happy woman, I'd like to know what is. And you've done it," she ended triumphantly.

There wasn't really anything for capping so patent a conclusion, and he could only rejoin, in a half-hearted way:

"You know you're flattering me most outrageously."

"Oh, no, I'm not," said she. This time she was even gravely convincing about it. "I'm told Amy hasn't grown old. And she would have if you hadn't seen to it. Every woman does unless her heart's satisfied. She can't help it."

Dixwell had an almost overwhelming impulse of candor. He wanted to say:

"My dear Meg Whidden, since that is your name, Amy has simply not grown old because she has devoted every fibre of her being to keeping the outward signs of youth. She began to fight wrinkles before the wrinkles came. She has been for the last twenty-five years in a perpetual state of mobilization, and as soon as the foe peers over the border Amy is there to smash him. She massages, she diets, she walks, she waves, she powders, she vibrates, she bathes in the devil knows what. That's why Amy is a well-conditioned little animal at an age when she might be a grandmother, and look like one."

It seemed to him, as he stared at the curling waves and smelled the tang of air and seaweed, and the keen sun warmed his face, that on such a day, in such company, he might speak the truth. It would be like getting a burden off his soul and handing it to some one else who was strong and willing, and would carry it for a while. If he could tell this Meg how he hated life as Amy and he had combined to make it, the hatefulness of it might be slightly purged away. But what he did elect was a dull return to a late milestone in their talk.

"You don't say why you're so discouraged yourself. Why do you think Amy could set you up again?"

She turned the brightest of looks on him, all made up of a gallant courage and the peculiar hardihood

of those for whose discomfiture nobody cares so very much, and who have therefore ceased to care themselves.

"Why," said she, "I'm growing old."

Dixwell stopped in his walk to look at her, lost a step, and then went on again. Was that how they were afflicted, the three of them? Were they overwhelmed by middle age already and too weakened to withstand the onslaught of the later enemy, so that they could only lie palsied in the trenches awaiting an attack they had no weapons to repulse? He considered her now keenly in his artist's way of memorizing the human creature he might want to reproduce. She was, in this breeze and sun, which had called the blood into her tanned cheeks, brilliantly wholesome. Only she had the indefinable air of not caring for the detail of her clothes or for her bearing. She was rather like a snug, strong bird fitted for the life of the air and not heeding its own shining feathers so long as they insured fleetness and warmth. What could she know about the smaller vanities of womankind?

"You wouldn't mind wrinkles?" he ventured. "When they come you won't care. You'll be thinking about something else. Better things, bigger. I can't imagine you flinching."

"But I do flinch," said she. "I think of it all the time."

"It?"

"Yes. Growing old. I'm willing to die. I'm not willing to change." The mention of it had brought a

hot rebellion into her voice. She looked at him, he thought, as if he had made the laws of change.

"I can't see," he said, "how Amy is going to help you."

"Why, because she hasn't altered. Because, at my age, she is young and sweet and dear, and she will be to the end. You'll attend to that. And I thought it would rest me to see her."

She said this so wistfully that Dixwell suddenly hated himself because he couldn't comfort her.

"But, God bless me!" he said, "you're not dwelling on these things?"

"Yes," she said, from her unthinking candor—"all the time."

So was Amy, he could have told her. And it was a good thing Amy had not been here this day, or they might have sat down to a confabulation over the treatment of chins and the proper diet for the middle-aged.

"That is," she went on, "it's in the background. I believe it is for every woman, if she's got a little hateful thermometer to register things. Vanity? No. It's not vanity. Something deep as nature. Why, I know the very day a certain wrinkle came over the edge of my left eyebrow. I know the year my right thumb-nail got a little ribbed. I'm telling you all this because you are you, and I never shall see you again. And you're not like anybody else. You know all kinds of secrets of all kinds of hearts. And you keep them, too. You won't tell. But you may tell. You may tell Amy."

"No," said he, gravely. "I sha'n't tell Amy."

"And you'll wonder," she went on, "even you, why I care so terribly, when I'm not a beauty. Well, I can't tell you. But it's my impression that if a woman sees herself changing, growing less young, it's harder than any death she will ever be called upon to die."

"You amaze me," said he. "It's incredible."

"That's because you live with Amy, and you keep her so contented she doesn't change. I don't believe she even stops to think she might. That's the wonder of a life like yours. You've thought of big things all the time till you don't remember the little things exist."

He wanted to cry out upon her irritably that she'd no business to assume such things about him, such star-piercing, mountain-climbing things. Here was he at the end of his foolish tether, and she was telling him he was quite gloriously free. And with no proof save that it must be so.

The day brightened steadily as they went. Then the kindly breeze died down, and the air was soft as June. She took off her coat, and he carried it for her. He even guessed, in his quick darts at unexpected emotions, that, in her hero-worship, she would prize the coat forever because he had carried it. So many women had behaved like imbeciles about a writing man. He had scorned them for it; but with her he felt only an ache of pity. She was clinging to him for heartening, and she did not know how ineffective he was to cling to.

"Sha'n't we sit down," he said, "here by the boulder?"

"I'm not tired."

"No. Not because we're tired, but because it's fun. It's a kind of playhouse, do you see? We can make sand forts and gardens."

It was a shallow cave, the side of the boulder turned to the sea, and Meg was immediately alive to its playhouse possibilities. She sat flat in the warm sand and began industriously building. At first he built with her, but presently he lay back and watched, and she built alone. He had a disturbing sense of calling to her across the chasm made by her misunderstanding, of begging her to leap it and accept him for a plain, average man who had failed, and see if she couldn't pull down his vision for him again and hold it for a moment in her two hands till he should feed his eyes upon it rapturously. But there was her own need of him as she had imagined him. He was her vision, he and Amy and their wedded harmony. At least he wanted to talk hard and fast and spur her on to talk, because this day was precious to him, and there wouldn't be much more of it.

"I'm sorry," he said, to start her, "you think you're going to hate growing old."

She left her excavating for a moment and turned to him her grave, absorbed face.

"It's the Dark Tower," she said. "You can't tell what it will be till you get to it. But all the time you've got to keep on marching—or riding—and suddenly you're there."

Something stronger than pity came over him, a passion of sympathy he had not felt for years. He wanted to tell her—or to have some man tell her, for that was the way he put it—that the Tower wouldn't have dungeons. It would have only light sweet spaces, and love would be there and joyance, and her cheek needn't grow pale because the blood could be kissed into it. But he only said:

"Maybe there'll be sun on the Tower."

"Yes, there may. Enough to show how dark it is. But inside it's black as pitch. With slits for windows—I don't remember what they call them."

"Well," said he, "if we're all destined for the Tower, what makes you assume Amy and I are going to escape it?"

"Oh," said she, "you and Amy'll get there, ultimately, of course. Only you're so occupied in looking at the scenery you won't have time to dread the Tower at all. You'll get there before you know it. And even then I dare say there'll be so much light on the Tower—your kind of light—you won't think it's dark at all."

He couldn't help being curious about her attitude to the palliations Amy found soporific on her way to the inevitable end.

"Now you know," said he—"I speak as unavailing man, you must remember—there are alleviations, they say—when you actually come to it—facial massage and that sort of thing. When you actually do begin to see the outline of the Tower you could stop and organize for the final march."

"No," said she, sweeping down a sand-pile with a turn of her brown hand, "that's no good."

"No good? The advertising pages of the magazines tell me it is the despairing last resort."

"I don't mean trumpery things of that sort," she explained absently. "They're no more good than this sand fort when the tide is on. Oh, no! I mean dying game, either being so splendid you aren't absorbed in yourself at all, or so happy—like Amy—and not sitting down to watch yourself wither. You see, when we were young we had the vision. True or false, we had it. And now it's gone—for most of us."

This was, pang for pang, his own disease. It was almost word for word as he would have put it. While he looked in silence at the play of her brown hands, shaping and destroying the mobile drift of sand, his inner hunger was crying out to her again to answer him across the chasm of his silence. It seemed to him at the moment that she only, through her own hunger, knew how to estimate his.

"We are exactly alike," he wanted to tell her, "sinking in the sea of inexorable change."

Amy was no more to him than the wreckage of a dream. He and this other fugitive were alone, banded by their common peril into a limitless communion. What if they could float together beyond the margin of their fears to some beach in the sun?—the beach, he knew, was the inevitable suggestion of this where they sat at their careless ease and compared notes about their past, the present shipwreck,

and the chances for the future. What bit of flotsam would bear them up and keep them breathing while they floated there? Suddenly, he saw, he must be the rescuer. He must build the raft out of his own discarded beatitudes, to take her to the land. She would sit there alone and listen to the monotone of a quiet sea, and in the old way of the spiritually credulous hold the shell of belief to her ear and fancy the rushing of her own life was the sweep of eternity. He mustn't, even if he could sacrifice Amy, ask her for understanding, because he had got to accord it to her. She saw in him the creature who, from an eminence of authority, was qualified to speak. Therefore out of his hunger and his fears he would make the raft to float her.

"Look here," said he, "if I were you I wouldn't be afraid of the Dark Tower."

"Wouldn't you?" She turned upon him a whimsically bright face. "Oh, yes, you would—if you were I."

"No, because"—he hit upon this quite at random; indeed something seemed to put it into his head—"because, you know, I fancy we were intended to hate the Dark Tower. It's a part of the beneficence of things."

"Why is it?"

She was softly grave now, in an ingenuous way he had hated in other women. This was the air they had when they wanted him to dogmatize or do the big bow-wow about his work. With them it made him turn about and run, or at least grow quite

crudely commonplace; but in her it was only softening.

"Don't you see, if we hate the Tower we shall try to get out of it just as fast as we can? And find out what's on the other side, or at least set our minds on it."

She knit her brows.

"Let me see," she said, "what is the Tower now, old age—or death?"

"Age. After that the other side, the side you can't in the least see as you're approaching. I fancy you'd begin to see it from the slits of windows on the other side. That's why you can't go round the Tower. You've got to go through."

"You think," she said, "we're to be allowed to hate our bodies, to be willing to give them up?"

"Yes. The chrysalis is rather a tight kind of shroud, you know. I suppose it gets tighter and tighter—while the wings are forming."

He could have laughed at this, the pious platitude adapted to minds more primitive than hers. But she was in such deadly earnest she couldn't even see it was a platitude, and he carried such accredited authority that whatever he said she accepted humbly. He wondered if that was the way the preacher sometimes felt, chanting the offices while his heart bled with doubt.

"If I could think it!" she began, passionately. "But I *will* think it. You tell me, and it must be so."

"We must meet again," he said hurriedly.

This slipped out. After all, he knew they couldn't meet. They couldn't have this lovely race, running side by side, each with glance fixed on the goal and yet always side by side. They had left Amy behind at her tiring-glass. She wouldn't even know they were off on their quest for the farther stars. She would be too absorbed in painting out the lines of life from her faded face. The woman here filled his vision. She topped the sea and sky. It was not only that she felt his hunger, but that she was, in an inexplicable way, his. It was immaterial that he alone knew it. If they were allowed to live along together, she would grow into oneness with him without a pang, for she need never see the lesser self in him. Her idealism was in equal measure with her honesty. She would offer her hero all kinds of worship, because a hero may demand and must receive. But she was denying him at the outset.

"No," she said. "I told you I'm going to sail to-morrow. And it's just as well. You've given me enough to live on for a long, long life."

"And you won't see Amy?"

He wanted to assure himself of that.

"I can't. And it's just as well. Tell her about it. Tell her how you've helped me, and tell her I'm going to keep her—and her youth and her happiness—for my vision."

Then Dixwell pulled his hat over his eyes so that he should seem to be looking at the sea, but he looked only at her hands, busy there in the sand, shaping and destroying and so wonderfully alive. Perhaps

he half hid his face from her because he could spare thought to wonder what she might see in it, what moved ecstasy of love and longing. And she did turn to him at last.

"Really," said she, "you have straightened it all out. You've made it seem—life, I mean—like a journey. Not a blooming and decay. I sha'n't forget. You and Amy will be in New York this winter?"

Suddenly he laughed. This was the winter he had meant to start on his adventure, but chiefly an adventure of the mind and without Amy.

"Yes," said he. "We shall be in New York—as usual."

"What made you laugh?"

He considered.

"Well," said he, "it was partly because you're such an idealizing little person, and our staying in New York is so humdrum. I shall be at work—just as usual. And Amy'll be—just as usual."

"She'll help you work."

Again he hesitated, and then he said, still gravely:

"Amy'll do her very best."

After that he helped her plan a garden in the sand, and they quarreled over it, and she swept out his paths with a flick of her hand, and then, talking about gardens, they found they really agreed perfectly, and also about houses, too. When he pulled out his watch he couldn't believe it, and couldn't believe the sun punctually overhead.

"When the waves get to that three-cornered rock

down there," said he, "it'll be time to run—for luncheon."

So they played a little more, and the wave came, and Dixwell got on his feet and gave her a hand, and she childishly besought him not to destroy their last garden, but leave it for the sea. And they climbed the cliff and went on to his proud house, where autumn yellows lighted the great garden, and he, with a quickened heart and some ceremony she did not see the truth of, brought her under his roof. At the table he noted with a wild momentary delight that she had been put in Amy's place, and that they were to have for an hour at least the intimacy of household ways. She had what he knew she would always remember as a beautiful time, and from his dream he watched her in a still content. She laughed at them both for being so hungry; but, though he ate, he hardly knew what, and it was she who roused him out of his dream. It was nearly three, she said, and she had to take the little local train to the town where she had left her friend and the friend's car. She had not allowed it to come for her. She wasn't very fond of cars, and it suited her better to go a part of the way by train. So they started out together for the station. Again she elected to walk, and Dixwell had a sense now of holding her back, mentally, of some part of him crying out to her:

"Don't leave me. Don't go."

He wondered what she would do if he should take her hand as they walked and hold it all the way.

He had an idea she would gravely permit it, as one permits a hero's indisputable rights. What if he said:

"I love you and we're going together."

Then he would have to explain that he was not the sort of fellow to say it after every afternoon at the sea, that he had in fact never said it in his life except to Amy. And it would bring the sky down about their ears. It might crush him, that avenging sky, and for that he didn't care. It would disarrange Amy, and for that he didn't care much, either, assuming that Amy would find ample resource in her campaign against the god of time. But what it would surely crush, the shattered sky, would be the raft of escape he had built that afternoon for Meg Whidden—built it strongly out of hero worship and platitudes and sheer love for her. He could see how the water would splash up about it as she and the raft went down. No, of all earthly things, that raft must float.

She had only a minute before her train, and in that minute he got a firm grip of her hand and held it.

"Love to Amy," said she, and looked at him with clear, candid eyes.

"Yes," he said, "and love to you."

This he thought he could permit himself. The ribbon of steam was forming down the track, and suddenly his sense of her dearness and his loss broke from him in the one word of old significance:

"Remember!"

She smiled happily; whatever the day had meant for her, she would not forget.

"We won't be afraid," she said. "Of the Dark Tower, you know. We'll put flags on it."

Then the ribbon of steam was nearer, and then was flying back to him like a signal, and his empty hand was warm.

THE TRIAL AT RAVELLO

THE Benedicts were at Amalfi when they got the letter from Ferdie which set them all by the ears. They were sitting in the Cappuccini cloister eating bread and honey and drinking tea at five in the afternoon: Gregory Benedict, the head of the family, a compact man of a modest portliness and a disposition to yield you the right of way in any matter not concerning his particular business; Mrs. Benedict, of an equal age and a complete set of carefully arranged ideals; Helen, a tall daughter with a surprised and inquiring expression of countenance; and Benedict's sister, known as Aunt Harriet. She, this aunt, who stood to the family and indeed to herself as one decreed to be an aunt and little more, was not yet fifty; but she had taught in a country seminary too fixed in its inherited traditions ever to become a college, and her standards of beauty and conduct were those of a day when women in like responsible positions wore dresses prematurely middle-aged and perhaps did their own hemstitching. Aunt Harriet was really extremely handsome, except that she lacked the bravado which is inevitable to all but the purest beauty. She had no audacity to set her off. When her brown eyes sought you they said: "Please excuse me. I am not intrusive. I really have a purpose in looking. I am going to make

a remark." Of any calculated commerce of glances and the repertory known in literature under "flashing," "glancing," "sparkling," she had the vaguest knowledge by hearsay. Her wonderfully white teeth disclosed themselves only when something accredited as humorous dared them to display. And her clothes, like the clothes of all female Benedicts, were made by a dressmaker of high ideals but inadequate equipment, who needed the work; they were, as Ferdie, Helen's married sister, had confided to her husband, after three months' travel and the moulting of like raiment, "sights." But they were flagrantly honest clothes. They looked like what they were, the covering of a highly self-respecting family of inherited modesty of station, living outside a country town so that father might be near his manufacturing plant.

It was six months before that Aunt Laura, Mr. Benedict's aunt, had died and left him her very considerable fortune, and it had seemed best then to fulfil the breathless purpose of years and go abroad for the summer. They had never contemplated going save as a body. They were a very united family. But Ferdie, named Fernandina, in regular descent from an ancestor whose father had been wrecked on the coast of Africa, had gone three months before them with her husband, who was general superintendent of the Benedict factory. It had meant a good deal to Benedict to give him up at that time; but Ferdie had been so passionately set upon it that the ordinary ways of withstanding

her had been exhausted about the time she developed nerves. This was her unimagined trump-card, and the family had played all they had. So Ferdie had gone, and here was the letter to say that she and Preble would meet them at Ravello, and they could talk over things there. She thought it best to give them an idea, so that they might be considering it. She wanted to leave Preble. She meant to live abroad. It would be perfectly easy on what father could allow her (it never occurred to her that Aunt Laura's money did not belong to all the family equally, and it certainly did not occur to the family as they read). She supposed they'd noticed that she and Preble weren't suited to each other. She realized now that she'd always known it, though coming over here had made it so apparent that she simply found there was but one thing to do.

This letter it was that turned the Benedicts homesick in the face of Italy. It robbed the honey of its tang and made the enchantment of that shore as idle as a painted screen. Mrs. Benedict, after a half-cup of tea, had taken the letter again out of her bag and read it for the fifth time. It was not a long one. She really knew it by heart. There had been no discussion of it; but now she addressed a question as directly to her husband as if he and she had been alone.

"I never noticed she and Preble didn't get on all right, did you?"

He shook his head. He could scarcely trust himself with a subject so shockingly alien to business.

These crude avowals of incompatibility were what, with a fastidiousness of which he had almost been ashamed, as too finicking, he had always wished the girls wouldn't read in the morning paper. And yet he had been too finicking even to forbid their being read.

"Preble's a queer Dick," said Helen. "He never has anything to say for himself."

She offered it impetuously, her cheeks flushing, as if it were difficult to confide to her elders even so small an instance of emotional bias. This was an old-fashioned family. They had the most intimate confidences in regard to the renewal of rugs and the desirability of transplanting the phlox, and they did pass letters about at the breakfast-table. They would have said they had no secrets from one another, and now that Ferdie had winged them equally with this arrow cunningly contrived to pin them all in a bunch, they hung there, with no power beyond a sympathetic flutter.

Aunt Harriet spoke now, with a like impetuous appearance of not daring to hesitate lest she find herself choked by custom.

"I understand what Ferdie means. I understand perfectly."

Mrs. Benedict turned upon her in an extremity of surprise, took up her lorgnon, and then dropped it with an apparent recollection that this was only Harriet and supplementary lenses needn't help. Mr. Benedict, too, turned, and with more purpose. His plump person bumped slightly in its chair, as

if it remarked, "Is it really Harriet speaking?" But all he could say was to inquire of Harriet, with a species of hostility, as if to ask also how a mere aunt could be so clever when the authors of Ferdie's being found themselves mired:

"You do, do you?"

Aunt Harriet had flushed a deep, becoming red. She knew, in the depths of her memory, why she could speak up for Ferdie and the miscalculated forces of nature. Aunt Harriet had her secret, not more than three weeks old. It went back to a night in Naples when she had run out of the *pension* bare-headed to post a letter. Immediately she was outside the court, the brazen spell of the city had assailed her, and she had fled on, a green letterbox, such as she knew at home, for her objective, but really with something crying out inside her, bidding her speed and speed, and never stop until she came on illimitable joy whereof this pageant was the herald. And as she paused to look up at the Bertolini, in its fire-fly sea of lights, she felt an arm about her waist. It did not feel startling, although no arm save that of a worshipping school-girl had ever lain there before. It was as familiar as her belt, and Harriet turned, with a pleased expectancy, and saw beside her an Italian officer. His expression suited the act he had just performed. It was audacious, yet humbly adoring, and Aunt Harriet found it exactly right. She did turn about, her letter still in her hand, and he turned with her, and thus encircled she walked back again to the *pension* in a

trance of acquiescence. At the door she paused, and the arm fell from her waist. There was a step on the stone-paved court within: the porter, Harriet, and perhaps her officer also, knew. He fell back a little into the shadow, brought his heels together, and made her an enchanting bow. Aunt Harriet went in, her letter still in her hand. She had forgotten that the porter might post it, and indeed it was never posted, for it was to one of her pupils, and Aunt Harriet, with a vague besetment that it had somehow shared in the profligacy of her adventure, tore it up as unworthy to invade the maiden precincts of the young. But that progress had told her what flames might be burning under the inherited tradition of New England snows. Aunt Harriet knew in her soul that the gold-laced swain had but spent an idle moment in the assault of her waist, and yet something in her told her a veil of high meaning had dropped on it from the romance of the world. He would never see her again; she never wanted to see him again—and yet somewhere, said that voice of lying paradox, he was seeking her, somewhere, in a fuller paradise than Italy, they would meet. So it was out of a more extended experience than any Benedict, she believed, had ever enjoyed that she faced her brother, whom she respected illimitably both as man and brother, and returned:

“Yes. I know all about it. I think Ferdie’s probably right.”

Gregory continued looking at her and, quite

unaided by any natural facility, accomplished the feat of becoming pop-eyed.

"Well," said he, "by George!"

"But, Harriet," said Mrs. Benedict, also regarding her from a high degree of amazement, "you don't mean you're prepared for it? Has Ferdie ever brought this up before?"

"No," said Aunt Harriet defiantly, "but I'm not surprised."

They were all three looking at her, she knew, with unvarying degrees of perplexity, at which she was, again, not surprised. They could not see the Italian officer in the background.

"Well," said Mrs. Benedict, "of course we shall all stand by Ferdie."

"God!" said Gregory, the solemn adjuration as unexpected to him as to the others. "I guess we shall."

Of the accompanying shock that Preble, whom he had considered worthy of marrying a Benedict, had been found wanting by one of the most precious Benedicts of the clan, he could not speak. It was all very well to stand by Ferdie. That was nature. But that a chap he had believed in as he had in Preble, liked him, indeed, too much to need to say anything about it, that Preble should in some unpardonable fashion kick over the traces, shook the foundations of his house. Preble's side of it was too awful to be spoken of, except perhaps by Helen, who hadn't the experience to know what she was talking about anyway, and was as likely as not to judge a man for the cut of his hair.

Thereupon they abandoned the sight of the siren coast to such as might have free minds for looking at it, and went off to pack—all but Aunt Harriet, who sat in her dream by the railing and watched the fishermen, vaguely like Peter and Paul in the Bible picture, hauling their nets. Once a splendid figure ran up the steps to the Cappuccini, and she drew back with a flood of certainty that this was he and he mustn't see her. And then her saner mind assured her that it was not he, and that if it were, this all-revealing daylight would hide her, in her middle-aged honesty, from him who had found her under the spell of night; and she leaned forward again and saw he was a man as old as herself and not Young Love at all.

That night they were at Ravello, established at the very top, all rather light-headed with the sudden lift from sea level, but Gregory and his wife keeping their minds strictly upon the business of standing by Ferdie.

"Guess we'd better take her along with us," he had said, as they were brushing their teeth with a rhythmic unanimity at neighboring stands, while the moon of Italy silently bade them take heed of the heart which alone shall rule.

"Mm," said Mrs. Benedict. "I never realized how much attached I was to Preble; but if Ferdie wants to get rid of him, you can depend upon it there's a reason for it."

And it was on the first day at Ravello that Ferdie and Preble were upon them, she almost running to

the summer-house at the end of the terrace to find them, and he stalking gauntly in her wake. As he approached them and they escaped from the pretty assault of Ferdie's caresses to greet him for this one of the last times when they meant to accept him at all, they saw, as with a common vision, how he had changed. Preble strikingly resembled the younger pictures of Abraham Lincoln. He had the same large-featured benevolence of gaze, and he had also one characteristic of the later Lincoln portraits: that look of most pathetic weariness. His face did not lighten in the least in greeting them, though he had, as Mrs. Benedict thought rather indignantly at noting his flaccidness, only the pleasantest recollections of them. And having shaken hands in a bony, perfunctory fashion, he turned about and left them, with a remark about seeing to the luggage. But Ferdie was with them, and they exclaimed over the wonder of her. Ferdie had changed. She was the plain one of the family, small without slenderness, and with no one feature to be thankful for. But, since they had seen her, Ferdie had attained distinction. She had in her hand that marvellous and priceless gift to earth's daughters who mean to inherit: she believed in herself. A number of artists had gone to the support of her in this arduous adventure. Ferdie had rather thin hair of no particular distinction, but it had been waved and twisted and turned until her small head was a marvel of modish prettiness. She had no better features than are needed for conducting the acts of seeing,

smelling, and their sister offices in a wholesome manner; but the slight expression of arrogance she had attained seemed to bring them into a harmonious agreement. Her clothes were just such as Aunt Harriet and Helen, on the way through Europe, had found in Regent Street windows, and despairingly regarded. And now this apotheosis of the old Ferdie who had worn flannel shirtwaists at home and even made a rhubarb pie with lattice work on top, for Preble's degustation, produced a vanity box, took a serious look at the state of her countenance, and here, in open conclave, rubbed a powder paper over her nose. But she didn't omit speaking while these rites were being accomplished.

"He hasn't gone to look after the luggage. We left it in our rooms. I told him I was going to begin upon you the minute I saw you. He hates talk more than ever. He says he wishes he was deaf and dumb."

"Well," said Mrs. Benedict, "that's a good deal for Preble to say."

"I suppose he is tired of it," said Ferdie, with a bright alertness, pulling her veil down over her face and settling it with some of those mysterious mouth contortions women adopt toward veils. "You see, I've had to talk so much. I've had to do a lot of it at night, because we've been sight-seeing by day, and of course he's tired. I am, I'm sure, tired as a dog."

But her air of gay equipment, of being equal to any situation, gave her the lie. A creature so ready

for life, it said, so familiar with its outermost supremacies, could hardly yield to so crude a thing as physical weariness. She challenged them all round, admiring face after admiring face.

"Well," she said, "you got my letter. I told you what I meant to do."

Her mother bowed in a solemn manner, as if she felt a crown being fitted to her head; but Gregory Benedict asserted, from a ponderous sobriety:

"We stand by you, Ferdie. I'd have sworn by Preb as I would by myself. But it's no use going over that now. I'm for having the fellow drop off right here and our staying on a spell. Then we'll put for home."

"Oh, but you see," said Ferdie, with the same air of holding the interview in her hands and tossing it about as suited the game, "I don't want to put for home. I want to stay over here."

"Why, Ferdie," said her mother, and in spite of careful habit she lapsed into a phrasing of her less-cultured yesterdays, "you don't want to stay any longer than father wants you should."

Ferdie's eyes were shining. What with her new accoutrements and her triumph, she looked actually pretty.

"The fact is," she said, "I've written a story."

"Short story?" Helen came pelting in. Her eyes, too, were shining. She had never imagined such doings in the house of Benedict. They might even, some time, by infection, get to her.

"Yes," said Ferdie. "And the *Torch Bearer* has

taken it and asked for another. So you see I've simply got to give myself to my work."

"You don't feel as if you could do it after you got home?" her mother suggested.

"It isn't that I can't write after I get home," said Ferdie, with a perfect air of exploiting everything time and travel could do for her. "It's simply that I've got to live over here and be—be different."

Here she stumbled from her height of perfect poise; but they all understood her better so.

"What does Preb say?" her father inquired, as if he couldn't yet visualize the rock of shipwreck and wanted the testimony of a man who had really struck on it.

"Oh, he said he'd stand for it as far as he could," said Ferdie. "But I can't call on him. He doesn't care for one of the things I care for—not one. Pictures, music—imagine Preb caring one snap."

"No," said Mrs. Benedict musingly, "I don't know as I ever heard Preble express any interest in music. That's why I always thought 'twas so good in him to let you have those lessons in town that winter." Inadvertently she was shifting to the side of the defence. "You know that was the time of the strike, and we couldn't even keep one girl, and Preb got up and made your coffee so you could take the early train."

"Yes," said Ferdie, with assurance, "of course I had to save my hands. I practised awfully hard that winter. I may take lessons over here."

They sat staring at her, Gregory in a fever of

perplexity because, as yet, he had nothing sufficiently tangible to go on, and the three women breathless with appreciation of Ferdie as they saw her. Gregory, too, was duly influenced by her marvellous equipment; but he failed to translate it into plumes and cloth. He thought only how glad he was to see her, and how much nicer even than usual she seemed—which, indeed, was the effect of her bravado and her hat. But the three women studied her clothes with ravishment. They were not so dull as to fail to see that here was accomplished that simplicity which is the last word of art. And the way she wore them! Ferdie was no prettier than she was before, and if the eye turned to follow her it was because she was a matter of line and contour, of silk and lace, a last cry of fashion, but a shriek of audacity, too. She was not so much modish as grotesque, but the grotesqueness voiced an assurance that bespoke some big pretension in the background. Surely Ferdie couldn't look like this, couldn't sit up like beauty enthroned and punctuate her talk with neat little gestures, if she weren't, in some fashion, more important than the Ferdie they had left. And the clothes spoke for her. Every wave of her hair stamped her right to be as she was. "Look at me," they said. And because they said it in such a complacent, mandatory tone, it was evident that Ferdie was worth their championship.

Aunt Harriet was the one who seemed to be seeking out the real Ferdie within her clothes. Her expres-

sion said she didn't care how shiny you made your hair with unguents pretending to be nature's own, and she didn't care how graciously the sun lay on the crests of it, nor how cannily the veil fitted over them. She was used to girls, and she could pluck out the heart of their mysteries.

"Ferdie," said she, in her school-ma'am voice.

Ferdie sat up a trifle straighter, if that might be, and gave her veil another little reconciling adjustment with the lips.

"Ferdie," said Aunt Harriet, "there's somebody else in this. You've met some man over here."

"Harriet!" breathed Mrs. Benedict, in a pained invocation of propriety.

Helen regarded the heaven about her and felt, not as if she were inexpressibly confused, as she must have been at Salem Field, if anybody had mentioned illicit love, but rightly curious. A sail was being dropped on the blue water below. It seemed like a fairy sail on a fairy boat, or at least a sail woven from the unreality of the stage. It couldn't have done so insignificant a thing as to bring a fisherman, or if it had, he would break into an aria and his entire purpose would have to do, not with fish, but with emotions that are eternally beautiful and so eternally right. But all this Helen did not think, in any explicit way, being a simple maiden with no imaginative equipment; she merely had a sense of ineffable acquiescence in whatever this ecstatic scene brought about, and she was not in the least shocked to hear Ferdie accused of erring love.

Gregory Benedict, who was not troubling himself acutely about Italian scenery, was the only one who, in the face of it, could keep his head. He looked at Aunt Harriet after her projectile had been launched, and ejaculated:

“What the devil, Hat!”

This last he had not called her since she had begun to teach, but Aunt Harriet was not moved by its curtness. There were some things, she concluded, that brother didn’t know. No Italian officer had ever laid an arm about his waist. But Ferdie, unabashed, was looking straight at Aunt Harriet, glance for glance.

“I don’t wonder you ask,” she said. “Of course it’s the most natural thing in the world. But there’s nothing in it. I’m not leaving Preble for another man. I’m simply leaving him because we’re not congenial. I’m very fond of Preb.”

Gregory was frowning a little now, but with perplexity.

“We’ve got to go into this matter of Preb,” he began. “Shouldn’t you rather I’d see him by himself and get it out of him?”

“Get what out of him?” asked Ferdie.

She had the air of wondering whether there were any more to be got out of him than she had got already, and if that were so of being ready to make a new essay.

“Why, whatever there is,” said Gregory testily. He hated to be made to speak before Helen. “What you accuse him of.”

Ferdie gave a little laugh, as nicely calculated as her clothes. "Why, bless you," said she, "I don't accuse Preble of anything. He's a dear old boy. I just want to leave him, that's all."

Gregory sat staring at her, again with that effect of straining eyes. Then he shook his head.

"You're shielding him," he told her. "It's very creditable to you, Ferdie. But you just answer me a question or two. Before we started, Preble cabled me to sell out some stock of his and send him the money. You didn't have a very big letter of credit, you two, but 'twas all you could afford. Now what'd Preble get into over here that made him cable for more?"

"Oh, that was all right," said Ferdie, with a carelessness not at all elaborated. "We simply had to have it. You have to, you know."

"But you hadn't been over here six weeks," Gregory pursued. "You couldn't have spent your letter of credit if you travelled as you'd ought to, as we're travelling, for instance."

"Well!" said Ferdie. Her eyebrows went up, and she glanced about at the other women with an affectionate acceptance of them as they were, but still from a perfect comprehension of how droll they looked. "Mother and Helen haven't had any clothes—not a thing."

"We planned it that way, you know, dear," said Mrs. Benedict. "It's saved us time for our sight-seeing; and, besides, there won't be any complications with the custom-house."

"Well, I sha'n't be complicated with the custom-house," said Ferdie. "I'm not going back. I've spent under eighteen hundred dollars, and I think I've really done pretty well."

"You've spent eighteen hundred dollars in clothes?" said Gregory. He grasped the railing beside him as if he felt an impulse to jump down the declivity.

"Why, that isn't much, father," said Ferdie. "If you could see the things they showed me!"

"Do you mean to tell me Preb footed that bill without a murmur, and simply cabled home for more?" pursued her father, still with his desperate clutch on the rail.

"Why, he had to," said Ferdie patiently. "I had to have the clothes, and they certainly had to be paid for. You wouldn't have had me go about in a shirt-waist made in Salem Field, would you?"

Helen looked down at her own silk waist not so much in dissatisfaction as a surprised certainty of perhaps never having met it socially before. Mrs. Benedict was speaking timidly but with a certain coldness:

"I don't wonder your father's surprised at the price of things, my dear; but I can't help thinking if you find Preble so hard to live with, it's on account of other things you don't want to speak about. Helen, I wish you'd get my blue shawl out of the top of my trunk. Here's the key. Now, Ferdie, you tell. I've been trying to think over cases where there was dissatisfaction. There's Romola.

But Tito was very different from Preble. And there was Rosamond Vincy. But 'twas her conduct more than his. I don't seem to remember in Thackeray—"

"O mother," said Ferdie, "that's all reading club. This is entirely different. I just tell you I want father to give me some money, so I can stay over here and let Preble go home. It's as simple as a b c."

But Mrs. Benedict went back to her precedents.

"I don't see what we could do better, dear, than take the best books we know," said she. "And George Eliot has always been praised for her lifelike characters."

"There! there, mother!" said Gregory. "Ferdie, as near as I can make out, you've no case against Preble. You simply want to shake him."

Mrs. Benedict gave a murmur; but Ferdie, to whom slang was not tabu, assented cordially.

"You want to stay over here and study music and write stories and spend eighteen hundred dollars in clothes whenever you feel inclined."

"I shouldn't have to spend anything for a long time," Ferdie corrected him. "I got a very good outfit—'in case.'"

"It's lunch time," said Aunt Harriet, dropping her eye-glass on the little hook attached to her silk waist. "You'd better go in and take your hat off, Ferdie."

"I sha'n't need to take off my hat," said Ferdie. "But I'll wake Preb."

Preble appeared with her at luncheon, gaunt and taciturn. Benedict made some gruff confidences to him on the news from the factory; but there was an air of uneasiness over them, all except Ferdie. The veil of silence didn't seem to touch her at all, or if it did she had been able to lift a corner of it and peer out with an almost pert self-sufficiency. There were other people at the table, a party motor-ing through and carrying the very air of worldly equipment that Ferdie had been mysteriously able to filch. They talked to Ferdie as of their own kind, and she answered them with a sophistication that left even Aunt Harriet gasping. She told them the Vandewaters were at Spa and Aunt Clara's rheumatism was much improved; and when Helen, in an unquenchable curiosity, asked her afterward how she knew the Vandewaters, she said she had seen them at the hotel at Spa and the old lady had talked with her about her rheumatism.

"Well!" said Helen, "I thought, from the way you spoke, you really knew the Vandewaters."

"Well," said Ferdie, "of course you have to talk to people about what they know. You'll have to pin that waist down, Nell."

But it was not only Aunt Clara Vandewater's rheumatism of which she had cognizance. She knew what was being played in Paris, and even the mysterious names at the Comédie. She had a little gossip about what Bernhardt—whose name she pronounced in a way to veil its identity from the denizens of Salem Field—had said to Mrs. Kendall.

"How in blazes does she manage it?" Aunt Harriet found herself saying to Helen that night when they were braiding their hair in the moonlight of Ravello.

"Why, Aunt Harriet, you said 'blazes!'" Helen switched off the topic to exclaim.

"Did I?" said Aunt Harriet dreamily. "Well, it's a word I never used before. I dare say I sha'n't again."

But she didn't mention that just now it didn't seem necessary to cavil at words; she had no prejudice, so they were telling enough. What were they? Symbols. And this was Life. But she thought, as she lay awake in the moon-rays that seemed to her the true effulgence of Diana's axles, that it wasn't so difficult to understand how Ferdie had managed it. Ferdie was studying the world now as if it were a guide-book to sophistication. With a mind quickened under this sun and moon, she was snatching at every straw to build her nest of knowingness.

The next day they found Ferdie had been up early and gone to walk by herself. She came, vivacious and breathless, to breakfast, drawing off long gloves.

"I left Preb asleep," she explained. "He didn't get any sleep the first part of the night. We talked. But I wasn't going to miss this morning air. Don't you know that essay, 'The dewy chrism of the day'? I wasn't going to lose that."

"You might have waked me," said Helen, much aggrieved, "and let me have it, too."

To this Ferdie didn't reply. She was sweetly good-natured to Preble, to the waiters, to the family. She had found that out, too: that the mantle of the socially equipped is an impregnable composure and ability to make things go. The family didn't know how to take her. She was excellent company, if you were willing to strain up to her height of cognizance; but she made them a little afraid. Helen, who regarded her from the bog of a sisterhood which had had no such social boost and where shirt-waists needed perennially pulling down, yielded to a malicious desire to hear what Preble thought of her, he who had been by while the statue was in process of moulding. She hadn't been sprung upon him as she had on them, full-armed from the head of Jove.

But Ferdie was not hiding her nest. She left them in no doubt of an intention to settle her future without delay.

"Let's go out to that lovely seat," she said, including them all. "Then we can talk things over. Come along, Preb."

Gregory had wanted a word with Preble by himself; but that was not to be accorded him, and he lighted his cigar frowningly and paced along in the rear. Ferdie was vivacity itself. No wonder, Helen thought, still aggrieved, when she was the one for whom the banners were going to fly and the shouting to be raised. She was the center of the picture. She looked as if she always meant to be. Some of us were going home to wear flannel waists again, and, in the discouragement of our state, perhaps insuf-

ficiently to pin them down. No woman of the three had forgiven Ferdie her clothes. They were in no condition to forgive from the slough of antithetical abasement where they found themselves.

"Well," said Ferdie. She lighted Preble's cigar for him very prettily, took a little silver case from her bag, and was about to open it, but seemed to think better of it and returned it to the bag. But Aunt Harriet knew what was in the case. She had once dealt with a pupil detected in smoking cigarettes, a circumstance that looked now as remote as "battles long ago." It seemed at this moment a matter of indifference whether Ferdie smoked or whether she didn't. Only it would be a pity to shock Ferdie's mother, which was, she supposed, why Ferdie had wisely abandoned the indulgence. But Ferdie was speaking.

"It's no use going over it all again. Preble and I just agree to separate, that's all. And of course I want you to know it, so it will be perfectly above-board and easy. And I want to stay over here, and of course dad'll make it easy for me. I don't need to ask you that, do I, dad?"

She had never called him dad before, and Gregory didn't object to an innovation in the way of names; but he failed to reply with the efficacy she had looked for. Indeed, he didn't reply at all. He had caught a glimpse of Preble's face, not only the face, but the man back of the man's mere appearance, and, unimaginative though he was, it shocked him. It was really the shock he might have had if he had seen

Preble drop dead. He drew his breath sharply between his teeth, and Helen, who was "father's girl," and always guessing him out under his silences, said quickly, "What is it?"

But Gregory had hold of himself now, though he still avoided looking at Preble. Having once seen the bleeding body of a man's happiness, he found it too terrible ever to encounter again. Gregory had seldom realized anything with the vividness of this sight of Preble's misery. The pageant of life, in its uneven values, was displayed before him. Ferdie, he saw, had darted ahead. She was at the first of the series of worldly goals. Old Preble lounged about the starting-post, and here she was, breathless but triumphant. She had learned to play the game more deftly than he. Poor old Preble! he never would play just this game. Gregory felt as if he himself were judge and jury in one. His predilections were swinging round to the defendant. If the judge side of him had to charge the jury side just at this moment, he felt that, in reviewing the evidence, he should have to lay stress on everything Preble had done to help Ferdie out in her clutchings at a more rarefied life, while they were at Salem Field, and what he was ready to do now. He heard a rustle of mother's dress as she rose and reseated herself, and the thought came over him, to the accompaniment of a shudder and an actual crawling of the flesh, "Suppose mother had proposed leaving him, 'way back when they were both as young as Preble and Ferdie, just because she had been hungry

for more life than he could give her, more silks, more rustling things and excitements and talk about Vandewaters?" His house of life, a solid structure with a tower and a mansard roof, seemed to be toppling down about him as he thought it. He felt like giving Preble a hand, and saying, "Hang on to me, old man. I'll see you through." And what was this Harriet was saying?

"You'd better consider that this is Italy. You won't feel the same when you get home."

Ferdie took out her vanity box and powdered her nose. She appeared to find some moral support in the act.

"Nobody feels the same in Italy," Harriet was boldly asserting. "I don't know how it would be if we stayed longer. But the first taste of it's like getting drunk."

"Harriet!" breathed Mrs. Benedict. Then she drew her lips in primly. "I can only say," she announced, in the manner of one to whom the task has fallen of leading the last hope, "that I have felt no temptation to become intoxicated. Nor has Helen. Nor have I seen any indication of it in my husband."

She seemed intentionally to leave out Aunt Harriet: a kind of purgatory by exclusion.

Aunt Harriet was not to be halted.

"I've had serious thoughts myself," she said, "of drawing out my savings and staying here till they're gone. When you're here it seems the only thing to do. But everybody can't live in Italy. Somebody's

got to stay in Salem Field, or the world won't balance."

It became evident that Aunt Harriet was the counsel for the defence. Preble turned a dull eye upon her. She seemed to be advising Ferdie to stay with him, and so she must be on his side. But Ferdie was answering brightly:

"Good for you, Aunt Harriet. You stay over here with me and we'll take an apartment in Rome."

"Oh, no," said Aunt Harriet grimly. "I'm going back to teach school. I'm going to take Italy in my pocket and pull it out and look at it."

"There! there!" said Gregory. "Don't get off the key, Harriet. We've got to talk this thing out."

"So," said Aunt Harriet to Ferdie, quite unmoved by any side issue of interruption, "I feel as if you'd make a mistake if you give up Preble for anything so far away from what you've been born to as—as this." She threw a comprehensive wave of the hand at the heaven of slope and sea below them. "You must remember, if it doesn't turn out as you think and you get rid of Preble and Preble gets rid of you"—here both Ferdie and Preble gave a little passionate murmur, which might mean one thing or another—"after you've once got a divorce, you can't go back on it."

"My stars, Aunt Harriet, I didn't say a divorce!" cried Ferdie. Her whole face was flaming, and she thrust the vanity box into her little bag as if she had to thrust at something. "I said a separation."

Preble threw his cigar over the parapet, got up and put his hands in his pockets, and stared at the sky.

"Why, of course you won't do such a contemptible thing as to separate from Preble," said Aunt Harriet, with the severity of the teacher who sets a disciplinary task of irregular verbs. "Send him back to Salem Field to fight it out alone? You've got to let him get a divorce, and not raise a finger, so he can marry again and make himself a home while he's young enough to enjoy it."

The Benedict family sat staring at Aunt Harriet as if she were its uncomprehended sibyl. Preble stared at the sky. What he thought no one could tell from his back. He seemed to be turning it on the entire Benedict family. There was no doubt that Aunt Harriet, by force of audacity, it might be, had made a hit. Gregory was the head of the family, assuredly the judge, but Aunt Harriet was taking the argument out of his hands. It was she who was charging the jury.

"Oh, come, Harriet," said he, "you don't know what you're talking about." But he said it weakly.

"As to your writing," said Aunt Harriet inexorably, addressing herself to Ferdie, "if you've got it in you, you can write about Salem Field."

"I don't want to write about Salem Field," said Ferdie. "Do you suppose I mean to tag on behind, writing dialect stories, like—" She paused rather scornfully, and then two angry tears came into her eyes. "I'm not so awfully young," said Ferdie.

"I may look it, and I intend to look it. You can do almost anything with yourself now, if you keep up with things. And I want to live as other people do."

"What people?" asked Aunt Harriet, and the Benedict consciousness trembled because a fibre of it was being wrenched to the bar.

"Like everybody that lives at all," said Ferdie. "You don't know the kind of novels I want to do. I want to do them like Marion Crawford and Henry James—and others. Father and Preble haven't even heard of 'em."

"Look here, Ferdie," said Aunt Harriet. She rose and stretched out her hands toward the sky with an unconscious magnificence. For a moment she held them so, and then, with an equal majesty, let them relax and fall. "I've taught literature, and I can tell you you couldn't do the kind of thing you want to if you should live here for the next twenty years. Some women could. You can't. You're not that kind. But—"

They were all watching her, really hanging on her words. She seemed to hold the entire Benedict family in her grasp.

"I tell you what," said Aunt Harriet. She forgot the Benedicts. She remembered Young Love and Naples. "If I could be putting out to sea down there with somebody I liked, I'd rather do it than teach English literature or write like Henry James. And you can go down there and take a boat. You can go with Preble. Preble just worships the ground you tread on. You do all the writing you want to.

But don't you think you've got to have the scene set for it, and you've got to live in Italy, and you've got to throw over your folks—because you're not a big enough woman, Ferdie, to go walking over things like that."

Ferdie surprised them. She began to sob.

"You don't know, Aunt Harriet," said she. "You don't know how big I can be."

"I don't care," said Aunt Harriet, "how big you are if you're throwing over a man you've made your home with when you haven't got a shadow of complaint against him."

"Preble's been a good husband to you," said Gregory, to his own amaze. He had no idea that his attitude had shifted or that he wasn't standing by Ferdie. "I don't say I won't do anything in reason in the way of money. I never've stinted you girls and I never shall. But when it comes to your saying Preble ain't up to the scratch, and that sort of thing, I don't stand for it, Ferdie."

"I do feel," murmured Mrs. Benedict, "that Preble's done everything in the world for you a husband could."

"Seems to me," said Helen—no one expected her to speak, but she dashed in with the alertness of a sisterly certainty that Ferdie might need taking down a peg—"seems to me, everything we've brought out shows how Preble's got down in the dust every single time and let Ferdie just walk over him."

Ferdie looked from one to another of them in a panic-struck surprise. No Benedict had ever, in

her experience, turned against another Benedict. At that instant Preble threw himself round and faced them. Gregory, in one brief look at him, saw how crumpled his face was, and how savage a misery dwelt in the eyes, and had to look away again. He had never seen a man cry.

"Now," said Preble, "I'll speak. Ferdie's going to have whatever she wants, and she's going to take it from me, and when I can't give it to her I'll say I ain't man enough to live and put a bullet through my head. If she's going to stay over here, I can sell the home place and board. I don't want any place without Ferdie. It's going to be enough for me to know she's living the way she wants to live. You don't any of you understand Ferdie."

Like Aunt Harriet, he looked big against the sky, a colossal figure made for protection, on which the lesser waves of life could dash leaving him unscarred—a little worn, perhaps, after a good deal of it, but never overthrown. The group before him dissolved, broke up, and shifted. Helen frankly put her handkerchief to her face and cried. Gregory blew his nose violently, and his wife murmured, "There!" Aunt Harriet stood at the rim of the world made by the edge of the terrace, another heroic figure that might, with Preble, know the meaning of life through nearness to the larger calls of earth.

But Ferdie had run to Preble like a child, and stood by him holding his big hand. It almost looked as if she were protecting him, perhaps by her silken touch from the ache that even giants may feel in

giant hearts. They turned together, he and she, and went off along the terrace, Ferdie still holding his hand until, in a moment, Aunt Harriet saw him put his arm about her waist and draw her to him. In a moment too, without a conclusive word, the other Benedicts dispersed to their letters or their guide-books. All that day they didn't have a glimpse of Preble and Ferdie. But at night when they made their moonlit way along the terrace, Helen, in advance, turned back to them.

"The seat's been taken," said she. "They're lovers, making love." Italy and moonlight were upon her, too, and it seemed as if she couldn't repeat the word enough. "Lovers!"

Then some one laughed: a girl's laugh, Ferdie's. A man's laugh answered it: Preble's.

"Come on," called Ferdie. "Come on, Family. We've got it all settled. We're going to stay three months more than we intended, and then we're going home together."

Then they all sat down and talked plans, and Preble, Ferdie's head on his shoulder, told a story he'd heard the day before in a smoking-room. It was a stupid story, but Ferdie led the laughter. Mother Benedict, from her demesne of matrimonial experience, realized that Ferdie, from some of those mysterious forces that prevail in matrimony, again considered her husband "about right." Gregory gave himself up to his cigar with an untainted satisfaction, and Helen, the warmth of virginal youth throbbing at her breast, wondered what made Ferdie

get up such a row if she really meant to stick to Preble after all. But Aunt Harriet, standing in the moonlight, the shower of it on her face and shoulders like a silver rain, thought back to the morning when she had made her plea for the defendant. The plea had been well directed, the verdict was benign. And yet, if Ferdie had left her husband and gone forth emotionally unloosed, Aunt Harriet wondered, with a throb of wildest envy, what she would have found in Italy.

THE MID-VICTORIAN

WHEN Mrs. Abergenny came down to meet her young friend, Philippa Foxcroft, who had been announced perhaps five minutes before, she found Philippa standing near the long window outlined by two Doric pillars of the veranda, and shaking hands with Inga, the maid. Rather it seemed that she was holding Inga's hand in affectionate detention. She dropped it, though not with the haste of having been interrupted in a social eccentricity, and turned to give the hand, no less cordially and no more, to Mrs. Abergenny. Inga, on the contrary, withered slightly in the changed atmosphere of the room, induced by the entrance of the lady from whom she received her wages and the right inculcation of conduct.

"Good-by, Eva," said Philippa, touching the initial vowel with a cosmopolitan grace. "Rehearsal to-night and to-morrow noon."

Then Inga, become temporarily Eva, with a little more red in her cheeks than was customary, though not more than proved becoming, also with downcast lids, went out in her list slippers, her little card-tray at her side like a fairy shield not yet wanted. Mrs. Abergenny stood for a moment looking up at Philippa, whom she found sometimes, with an inexplicable irritation, too tall, too full of the west wind of curt

incisive fact. Philippa was splendid, Mrs. Abergenny's husband told her, an Amazon. She needed only shiny breastplates and a spear to walk on the stage and sing her confidence in life. But she lacked a good many of the fringing softnesses Mrs. Abergenny had felt necessities in her own day. There was no atmosphere about her—save perhaps the honest dawn—no questioning reverence in the tent of her superiors. Mrs. Abergenny knew that her husband, who wrote novels, was Philippa's superior: and yet Philippa seemed to have nothing to learn of him. She always spoke to him with a gay unconsciousness of anything beyond their neighborly affiliations, perhaps as Parkman's uncle, and with a shade of frank solicitude when she wanted to hear from Park. Sometimes Mrs. Abergenny had an impulse to reach up and lay hold of her strong shoulders, shake her into attention, and say:

"You tall, gaunt girl, don't you know Robert Abergenny has written novels translated into foreign tongues and praised in England?"

In the second while they stood looking at each other, delicate, plump, peach-colored matron and well-equipped girl, some of these antagonisms came out, but in a glance only and this from Mrs. Abergenny. Philippa's limpid grayness of eye beamed forth pure affection, an inability perhaps to be moved save from abstract causes.

"Eva is going to play in the mystery play," said she, when they had seated themselves.

"You call her Eva," said Mrs. Abergenny.

"Yes, that's her name. Isn't her name Eva?"

"I believe I do remember it was something different," said Mrs. Abergenny, wrinkling her brow slightly in the effort of concentration. "We called her Inga because that nice girl that got married was Inga. We've had three Ingas now. It's so much easier."

"Could she rehearse to-morrow at noon?" asked Philippa. "Eva didn't like to ask. It's a bad hour, but it's the only one the mill-hands have. And that's the last rehearsal. Performance to-morrow night, you know."

"Yes," said Mrs. Abergenny, with dignity. "Cook will wait on us at dinner, I'm sure."

"When's Park coming?" asked Philippa, with a plump directness staggering to Park's aunt.

When Mrs. Abergenny had lived in the shadowy, iridescent-vapored land of tentative engagement to her husband, she couldn't have mentioned his name in such evident fervor of interest, even if he had been away the eight months Park had used up in his on-slaughts on the camps of city journalism.

"Mr. Abergenny will be home to-night," she said rather primly. "He will be likely to know the latest."

"Has Mr. Abergenny been in New York?"

"Yes, for three days. He thinks it wise to go on once in a while to make the rounds of the editors. I fancy it's partly to see Park. He gets homesick for him."

Philippa was wrinkling her brow now, unbe-

comingly yet frankly, with a hard intensity. There was nothing of the wistful pray-do-tell-me-if-you-know about it that makes a girl's pure brow so charming. It said rather:

"I'm thinking. In a few minutes I shall have weighed the matter. Then I'll inform you accurately."

"I want awfully to get hold of Park," said she. "You see, Mary Crewe has been collating her mill-operative data. I want to know what Park thinks about it: whether he'd advise her to get it into shape for half a dozen articles or more. If he could just sit down and listen to her, it would save a lot of writing back and forth."

Were not she and Park then writing back and forth, weaving the fabric of their dream, or did they wait for crucial topics like data to spur them to epistolary haste?

"I'm sure Park would be delighted to do anything he could," said Mrs. Abergenny, the least stiffness of unsatisfied inquiry in her tone. "Is Miss Crewe a college friend?"

"Yes," said Philippa. Waves of brightness were flushing over her face. She evidently believed in her friend tremendously. "She's visited me a lot."

"I don't think I ever met her."

"No. There never's been any time for calling. Besides, for the last year she hasn't come here at all. She's been working in the mills."

"In the mills?" Mrs. Abergenny repeated, with an involuntary warmth of pity. "Poor child!"

"Oh, no," said Philippa, "not that way. She's not working for a living. Mary has her own money now. She is simply going round and hiring out under assumed names, working in the same conditions with other girls to find out what the conditions really are."

A flush crept into Mrs. Abergenny's face. She looked a dignified remonstrance.

"That certainly doesn't seem to me," she said, "the thing for a young lady to do. Pardon me, Philippa. But even if she is your friend—"

Philippa didn't blame her. She had a large, kind way with Mrs. Abergenny. It sometimes mirrored, in the older woman's mind, the toleration of her orthodox friends for her defined Unitarianism. They hardly recognized it as a faith, but they regarded it, she thought, as too inconsiderable to be rejected. But Philippa was speaking in a warm, moved voice, born out of enthusiasm over Mary's deeds.

"Mary's done a lot. The eight-hour bill in Hill Haven really was due to her. There's Mr. Abergenny."

A town hack was crawling up the driveway, and by the time Mrs. Abergenny had the door open, her husband had paid his quarter and picked up his suit-case from the veranda where the driver had deposited it with a friendly ease, and was smilingly in evidence. He was a tall, personable man over sixty, looking out of kind eyes set round with wrinkles and ambushed under well-cut brows. He made a

distinguished figure, wearing the caped coat and soft hat his wife thrust on him as fitting her especial taste. Abergenny found them sufficiently comfortable. He would have hooted if he had come on the childlike subtlety of her motive, that they made him, as an author, picturesque. He kissed her, not in a matrimonial meagreness, but with a soft enthusiasm.

"All right, Ellen?" he asked.

Ellen had flushed in a perfect delight. She was more than all right. She was his with a young intensity. Philippa, also receptive, had come into the hall, and he shook hands with her. She was ready with the instant question:

"When's Park coming?"

"Why," said Mr. Abergenny, in a gay consciousness of having his answer pat, "Park's coming to-night."

"To-night!"

Both women echoed it.

He nodded.

"He wasn't in New York. I haven't see him. He's been in Minneapolis with Eaton Lang. They're putting on a play of Lang's."

"Trying it out," supplied Philippa. "But coming here?"

"On the way. Be here a day or two I understand. I'll tell him a young lady's been inquiring for him."

Mrs. Abergenny threw him a quick, repressing look. "Don't chaff," it said. "Philippa really

shouldn't have asked for him. Don't encourage her."

"Tell him to come over," said Philippa, the brusqueness of it qualified by her bright eyes. "Or, no, you needn't. He's got precious little time. Mary and I'll run over here."

She had shut the front door behind her, and Abergenny had got off his coat, before his wife knew really what comment it was fair to make on a girl they liked as they did Philippa. But when he had gone into the front room and mended the fire and stretched his legs to it, in a frank relief at finding himself at home, she allowed herself the interjection, "Did you ever!" That was safe. It was so safe that Abergenny saw nothing in it. He took her hand, patted it, kissed it, pulled her little chair nearer, and put her into it. Then, the flush gone from his face and the light of recognition from his eyes, he settled into a muse of his own, and in that she caught him.

"Why, Rob," said she, "you're tired." He pulled himself back.

"No," said he, "I don't believe I'm tired—very."

"Did you have a good time?"

"Well enough."

"See all the men you meant to?"

"Yes, I guess so. Yes, I did."

"What did Ellis say about the serial?"

"Well"—there he dragged himself still further out of his muse, and the laughing lines knit round his eyes—"I didn't mention it."

"You didn't? Why, that's what you went for."

"I tried to." He seemed to be justifying himself to her, justifying his failure to himself. "This is what Ellis said to *me*: 'Abergenny, the magazine's going splendidly. All the Jews are writing to me about the immigration series. Circulation's gone up like the deuce.'"

"But you don't object to his pleasing the Jews."

"Dear, no! Like to please 'em myself. But listen to what he said next: 'I've got three stories of yours in the safe.' Well, after that—"

"Yes," said Mrs. Abergenny thoughtfully, "I see." But she recalled herself to her office as heartener of the hearth. "I think you're too sensitive."

"No," said Abergenny, in a smiling consideration, "I don't think I'm too sensitive. I think I'm just sensitive enough."

"Well, where else d'you go?"

"Oh, I dropped in at the *Islander* office, and they didn't mention the magazine at all. They asked me to lunch."

"D'you go to lunch?"

"No. I wasn't hungry."

The wave of her partisanship towered and rushed upon him, bringing the salt tang of allegiance.

"O Rob!"

"You see, Ellen," he went on—he had begun patting her hand again; it looked as if he had something to break to her—"while I've been sitting in my study here, the world's been moving."

"Well!" said Ellen. "My patience! but haven't we moved with it?"

"I can't continue the terrene figure," said Abergenny, "but I've a strong conviction that I've got left."

"You don't mean it's what that doctor said somewhere about not working after forty?"

"No, no, plenty of 'em are working after forty—after fifty—after seventy, working to beat the band. I'm not in step somehow. I fitted a certain time. I was the round peg in the round hole. The time's only something to be remembered now. I'm there just the same, in my round hole, but I don't move a cog."

"What is it?" cried his wife, in a passion of resentful wonder. "What's happened to everything? That's what I'd like to know. It's the same thing throughout. It's what makes Philippa's feet so big."

Having thus embodied her distaste of the athletic and well developed, she was immediately ashamed. However, he understood her, though Philippa's feet had never been used by him to the disparagement of modernity. He always saw them walking on the mountain-tops of hope.

"You see," said he, "I'm not timely."

"What do you mean by timely?" she pursued him.

"I mean chiefly," said Abergenny, "brotherly love."

He said it gravely, and yet with a curious distaste, as if he couldn't accept it in its present guise.

"Why! why!" She could scarcely control her baffled wonder. To her he was brotherly love. She

knew the kindness of him, the humility, the things he had done and been.

"Dear girl," said Robert, "it's a science now, and you and I haven't taken that course. We don't know the terms. We couldn't use 'em if we did. It's like saying their creed in their sleep. We only say it when we're awake. They're chanting their creed, they're printing it, putting up posters, turning out pamphlets, cheap editions, *éditions de luxe*."

She stopped following him there. He had got into the cloud where he hid sometimes and talked to himself, and she was content because the obscurity of the cloud was soothing to him, and she could always think it over afterward.

"It's an esoteric society," said he, "with passwords. 'Do you love your brother man? If you don't say so, you don't. Repeat the misdeeds of the industrials. Give the lineage of the conspicuous railroad robberies. If you can't, you'll get left.' Ellen, as sure as shooting, I *am* left."

He was making a joke of it. That was serious, appalling. The puppets he had dressed up for jokes had been skeletons, spooks he was actually afraid of. Tears were spotting the pretty gray of Ellen's dress. For one of the few times in his life, Abergenny failed to see them.

"Going to New York isn't an adventure any more," he discoursed.

"You've been so many times," she reminded him.

"Ah, but it used to be an adventure. I felt as if I were carrying on nuggets of gold, all in my brain.

They wanted it then, the merchants that squatted in the market-place. They acted as if I'd got a virgin mine, and was a cunning artificer besides. They crowded about me. Now they're round the corner looking at samples from the other mines."

"You can do exactly as good work as you ever did," she countered hotly.

"Of my own pattern. Don't forget that. But I'd like one stupendous adventure yet before I die—throw myself into something neck and heels. That was being young, I suppose, Ellen. We never knew what was coming. We never cared. That was the witchery of it. If I could have an adventure—even a poor elderly adventure—an adventure on paper—Hullo! there they are."

Eaton Lang and Park were putting their heads out of the low-browed cab. They seemed to accomplish it all in a rush, flung the man his coin, seized their suitcases, pelted up the steps, and Park enriched Aunt Ellen with his home-coming kiss. From that moment the house took on a tumultuous warmth of preparation. The "boys" went to their rooms, and Mrs. Abergenny invaded the kitchen and herself impressed cook with the deeply significant nature of the next repast. It was not dinner. No one dined in those white-pillared houses. They simply sat down to something indifferently called tea, an assemblage of dishes as rich as hospitality and inherited cook-books could manage. Mrs. Abergenny put on her lilac silk and she and her husband were ready to go into the dining-room when the

boys came down. Looking at Park, who, though Robert's nephew, was, as she told them both, the only son she had, she warmed with maternal pride. Park was not tall. That had seemed a pity, a few years ago; but now he had broadened out, and he was hard and strong. His clean-shaven face had much of the Abergenny distinction, though none of the whimsical query that made her husband's dear to her. Park questioned nothing. He was sure. Eaton Lang was the same type of fellow. They might have come out of an illustration in a modern book. They ate a great deal, with a frank enjoyment, and were very nice to their hostess. Park was chaffing her about the coquetry of her lavender and lace, and condescending to her in a fashion she liked. It was a little cocky, a purely masculine brand, and she never objected to even a young man's method of setting her sex right. She liked, she said, their point of view. But now she caught Eaton's question to her husband.

"What percentage of Letts are there here in the mills?"

Abergenny hesitated, and Abergenny's nephew burst into a laugh, quick with affectionate tolerance.

"He can't tell you, can you, Uncle Rob? He don't know a Lett from a—hindrance."

"Come, come, now," said Abergenny. "I'm a very intelligent uncle, give me time."

Park had turned frankly to his friend, who, he knew, was always snatching the reins of talk. And he did handle them capably, though with a perfect

unconsciousness that there are serviceable modes of driving not approved in the conventions of whips.

"I told you what sort of a town this is. Uncle don't know a soul out of his class."

"Oh, come now," said uncle, again tolerantly, "what is my class?"

But this Park smilingly waived, as if both he and uncle knew.

"It isn't you alone, uncle, it's the whole bloomin' town. Your class refuses to see that there's been anything new since the shipbuilding days. Meantime the population's shifted. There's a big percentage of Italians, Syrians, Lithuanians, Poles. They're citizens. They vote. Their bosses sway the vote. But uncle"—he was talking to Eaton now—"uncle only knows he meets shiny-eyed foreigners in the street when he's pottering down to the post-office to get an English review, and they make him think of Italy, and he goes off into a pipe-dream about his sabbatical spree, don't you, dad? Park was very affectionate when he said "dad."

Mrs. Abergenny, listening, felt the angry color in her face. Her pretty hand found itself trembling as she lifted her fork, and she laid it down again with a delicate composure. She was afraid to look at her husband lest she should catch the quiver of eld shown up by youth. But Abergenny was explaining now to Eaton, and his unmoved, genial voice gave her a new thrill of partisanship. She was old enough to know composure costs something.

"Park told you about our sabbatical spree? We

inherited a few thousands, and when I feel my joints stiffening and can't write (because I can't get a good pen), can't read (because my arm isn't long enough)—you know the reasons we find for getting turned out to pasture and keeping our self-respect—then my wife and I are going to Italy on a regular bat. It's going to be my last piggishness. She's doing it all for me and I'm letting her. She'd rather sit down here and see the grass grow, wouldn't you, Ellen?"

"I want to go very much," said she. But she didn't and she knew he knew it. These were the pious rites of her worship.

"Good scheme," said honest Eaton. "I tell father and mother to spend every cent they can for the next five years. After that it's all downhill. Sure to be."

Again Mrs. Abergenny flashed a hot look at her husband. It found him smiling.

"A bit of ham, Eaton?" he was saying. "See this little thin fellow with the ring of fat. Doesn't that tempt you, my boy?"

It did, and while Eaton's plate went up, Eaton himself insisted fatefully:

"What's the percentage of all the foreigners in the mills?"

"I don't know," said Park. "Phil could tell you. How is Phil?"

"Very well," said Mrs. Abergenny. She felt disconcertingly remote from her nephew at that moment. He seemed to be committing *lèse majesté*

all round. "Philippa was here this afternoon. She has a college friend staying with her." An acrid impulse prompted her to add, "A girl who has been going about hiring herself out in mills and telling what she saw."

"By George!" said Eaton. He had lost muscular control of his eye-glasses, in his recognition of the distinguished Mary, and sat looking at Mrs. Abergenny with a myopic softness of gaze which seemed somehow to reflect Mary Crewe in person. "Mary Crewe!" he offered. Then he got his glasses on again and with them resumed his front of armed sufficiency.

"Of course it's Mary Crewe," said Park. "I'll telephone Phil and see if we can get 'em over here this evening."

"Parkman!" breathed his aunt. She had determined, after the first incursion of these redoubtable young Scythians, not to be surprised. The infant generations shouldn't catch her napping. She would even entertain their catchwords as legitimate English and no bastard brood. But she had to add, because the discipline of manners demanded it, "Don't you think you'd better ask if you might call?"

Park was innocent of anybody's ban.

"They'd better come here," said he. "They're great girls. Dad'll love to hear 'em."

"Do you know Philippa's friend?" Mrs. Abergenny was asking Eaton, fixing him at the moment, all unconsciously, with a gaze of frigour bidding him beware how he spoke of young ladies with the laxity Park had so unhappily betrayed.

"Not personally," said Eaton. "Know her work, of course."

"Oh, we've got to have 'em," said Park, "unless they've something on to-night. Is Mary advertised to speak?"

"Not that I have heard," said Mrs. Abergenny, with an inclusive dignity encircling all young women who might speak.

Park did telephone, and the girls would be delighted to come, though late. They had to go first to the mystery-play rehearsal. And they did come by nine, after an interval of De Koven and Victor Herbert, rendered happily by the boys in turn at the piano.

"Fancy!" said Abergenny to his wife, in an incredulous delight at the moment when Park was letting the girls in at the door. "They don't bring their slippers now. They bring their brains."

By the time their hostess got to them they had their hats off in the hall, and instantly, in an incursion of youth tumultuously splendid, they were in before the fire. Philippa wore her morning suit, the tailored skirt, the shirt-waist and stiff collar, but Mary Crewe, a redundant type of beauty, was in blue silk, lacy and tumbled from long-continued packing and an imperfect understanding of what a hot iron can do. She had drooping slantwise lids and an irregular, enchanting mouth, full bloom of the cheeks, and an irresistible laugh.

"How that girl has escaped marriage!" Abergenny managed in an aside to his wife while the others were

playing a quick game of question and reply. There they were at this village hearth, the shrine of security, loud in what seemed to be an investigation of turmoil in the corners of the earth. China and Morocco were pawns in their hands; Persia was a card of destiny. Mexico! they struck that like a warning note to summon the continent, all continents, to accountability for the condition of the man who worked with his hands. This man—he was known by a big generic Labor—seemed to be the atom for whom the earth was swung and the moon and stars created.

Inga, pink from her run home after rehearsal, came in to bring a basket of wood for the fire, and Mrs. Abergenny glanced up at her sharply to see whether she wore another look. She must, if Labor was the true mistress of the world. She wouldn't have been surprised to see Inga with a definite circlet on her brow, such as queens used to wear with no foreboding, or Inga grown colossal like the Melian Victory. But Inga was unchanged, soft-footed, deft, and the others didn't see her at all. Only Philippa gave her a little smiling nod, and moved a chair slightly to let her pass, and Abergenny got up and took the wood from her and said:

“Don't do that again, Inga. It's too heavy. If Jake isn't there, call me.”

But how the news of the world coruscated in sparks from the running wheel of talk! The air beat with the aroma of young blood, young breath. The four adventurers into their new continent of hope were triumphant with the working possibilities

of the land. It was all promise within a hair of fulfilment. They named the paths they had cut through the country of their conception. They brought big tales of smashing the natives and the toll of the slain: so many capitalists dead by the Mauser of investigation, so many railroads posted with cautionary guide-posts, "This way to hell." Abergenny, on the run, followed them like a game old dog at the wake of the pack. He had his special intoxication: the seething of young life, the glitter of untried knights athirst for battle.

"But don't slay more than you can resurrect," he caught himself murmuring. And then,

With my cross-bow I shot the albatross

Nobody heard him, nobody but his wife, and when she called from her end of the semicircle:

"What is it, Rob?" he gave her a little crooked reassuring smile that bade her be silent as he meant to be. But presently there came a name he knew. It was an English name of some repute in ink. He did want to speak there. If anything was his province, it was the charted shore about the sea of ink. But they used their catchwords here too, and Abergenny had to remind himself that he had had catchwords in his day, imbibed from authority, forty years ago, only he had thought them academic.

"Galsworthy is It at present," said Mary, and Lang capped the verdict by pronouncement on Shaw: "the biggest thing since Aristophanes."

Mrs. Abergenny wasn't entirely controlled by her

husband's warning look. Here she did cast her trembling ballot, wondering why Rob couldn't represent her.

"Shaw is a vulgar man. I saw one of his plays once, and I shouldn't willingly see another. If either of you girls are ever invited to go I hope you'll refuse."

"Dear auntie!" said Park, generously.

He laid his hand on hers, and she let it lie there and hoped he didn't feel the pulses beating underneath. But Eaton was talking to Abergenny.

"You see, Mr. Abergenny, we can't ignore the tremendous movement over there in England among the younger men."

"There's always been a good deal of young blood in young men," said Abergenny, with a mild appearance of offering a dish likely to be refused.

"Oh, yes, but not like this, Mr. Abergenny."

"They've had their bread riots, they repealed their corn laws, they even abolished the slave trade in their dear old dominion. They've had some rather broad schemes of colonization. Had their visionists, too. Even old Southey dreamed about the Susquehanna. Also there was a disquieting French Revolution next door and Boney imminent. Oh, there's been something doing in that vicinity for quite a number of years."

"But not like this," chanted the young voices, in a harmony almost too gay to fit the sombre theme. "No, it's not like this."

"No," said Abergenny, "I'm not prepared to say it was like this."

Mrs. Abergenny looked across the young pink faces in a rage of revolt against them all.

"It is like this," she wanted to cry out. "If Robert says it is, it is."

But for a moment then she was placated. For it appeared that Eaton Lang, who, with the precocity of the age, had produced two plays, was putting the barrels of money he had amassed into a magazine, and she made no doubt, when he began to tout his scheme, that Robert was to come in for a serial. Park, it appeared, had two shares in the concern. He had written no play. All his potentiality for investment lay in his hand-to-mouth journalism. But he was investigating, organizing. He was "on to" a few things. He'd show them yet. But it also became obvious that Lang had no leaning toward serials, unless, indeed, they concerned the Syrian immigrant. Philippa, taking him to the mystery play, was conferring an editorial benefit.

"You know the sort of fellows he wants, Phil," said Parkman: "cobblers or mill-hands, that can sit down and reel off the facts. We'll dig out an interpreter and maybe get a stenographer, and we're made. It's a cinch."

Philippa knew perfectly. She could put her hand on half a dozen men, all conversant with want at home, all with the wit to remember the process by which unskilled labor was lured over here to the ideal conditions that slumped to chaos, once the workman grappled with them. She had a fluent as-

semblage of strange names ready for him. These men were of her special friends.

It was throughout an evening of talk full of light and color and go. Though it began late it lasted into the night. At the end Park and Eaton took the young women home—Mrs. Abergenny wondered, with a flouting humor foreign to her, if Park would have to be prompted—and when they came back they were not talking about the general decadence of the world. They were discussing Mary Crewe's equipment for conquest.

"A very crumby little person," Eaton Lang was vociferating in a pleased excitement.

"Very crumby indeed," said Park succinctly. "Mary's all right. So's old Phil. Going to bed, Aunt Ellen? Guess we shall have to sit up a spell and smoke."

Abergenny, too, had meant to hang about for half an hour and smoke, partly to set his mind in order and, it might be, to meet his young Scythians man to man, with no womenfolk by to ease tensions and deflect the stream. He never had understood Park so little. In the eight months since he had seen him the boy had hardened into a mould of individual life. Still Abergenny thought even he, whose serials were not demanded, had a knack at meeting fellows under his own age, perhaps because he liked young wine as it frothed out of the butt. But he found himself going meekly up to bed with Aunt Ellen. In his dressing-room he stood a moment, hands in his pockets, and grinned.

"I wonder what made me do that," said he. "I wonder why I didn't say, 'Sit down, boys; try one of these. I imported them myself.'"

"Did you speak, Rob?" his wife was calling.

"No, darling," said he, grinning still, "I didn't speak." But he began talking then—profanely—about his cravat.

Mrs. Abergenny retained a very confused impression of that night. It was moonlight, and she sat up on the white island of her bed and saw the pattern of the curtain on the wall. Her husband, too, awoke and he saw her sitting there, a white fluff tied round her head because she was afraid of the night air, and she looked to him like some sort of angel with a frosty pow. But she was wringing her hands, and her voice seemed to wring itself too.

"O Rob," she said, "O Rob! I don't want them to love their brothers better than you do."

"Come here, old girl," said Robert. He left his white island and came to hers, and drew the fluff to his shoulder. "Don't you worry. They've formed a trust, that's all."

Then the alien tongue the others had talked that night grew hot in her mouth, and she heard herself saying: "Has it got to be busted, Rob? Has that trust got to be busted, too?"

"No, dear," said Rob. "It can't be busted. It'll last as long as the leaves grow in the spring and there is a lover of his kind that wants to die. Not that these boys and girls want to die. They're topful of life. They're onto the game."

She found herself a little dizzy, even with that security of his shoulder.

"They seem to feel things so much," she said. "Do you suppose they feel them so much more than you do, Rob?"

"*Weltschmerz?*" asked Rob. "Some of them actually do feel it. There's always been your priest and your martyr. Some of them feel so because they like to be in the know. Some of them get a salary out of it. Some of them are sentimental. Some are forensic. Some are cocky. But the louder they talk the more it'll get into the ears of the world, and possibly the old world'll hypnotize itself into thinking it really does love its brother. And by and by there'll be things it'll be ashamed to do."

"Will they change it?" she heard herself moaning. "Will they change the world so we sha'n't know it?"

"Oh, we shall know it all right," said Rob rather grimly. "For the present they'll chiefly strike the fetters off one leg and put them on the other. They'll overthrow Dagon that is Capital and set up Dagon that is Labor. And as soon as Dagon that is Labor finds he's god, he will behave exactly as Dagon that is Capital did and snuff out of his brazen nostrils for human sacrifice."

"Don't, Rob," said she, for the moonlight seemed to tremble on the wall. "God won't let them do such things. At least I hope he won't."

"Do you think any of it's done without him? Do you think it's these atomies of children that are making all the pother? It's God himself, you little

Unitarian, you. He's increasing the police force. Lots of the force are being bribed, but still they've got the badge."

"Is God on their side?" Ellen was crying. "Is He in it, too?"

"He's on everybody's side, you simpleton," said Rob. "Didn't you know that? Also they've got science up their sleeve."

"I don't want science," said his Ellen. "I'm not accustomed to it. I'm accustomed to religion."

"Poor duckie," said the voice. "Poor old duck."

In the morning she awoke with that apprehensive feeling of expecting to see the spectres of the night before. But the room looked quite the same, and the sunlight on her pin-cushion was reassuring. Rob strode about whistling in his dressing-room, and she called to ask if he was all right.

"Yep," said he, a paraphrase he never used unless he was right indeed.

Ellen, as soon as her hair was done, went in to give him his morning kiss.

"Did anything happen in the night?" she asked him.

Rob looked fresh-colored and agreeable. No, he told her. Nothing particular, he guessed. Same old night.

"I feel as if I'd talked in my sleep," said Ellen. "I wish I could remember all of it. Some of it I can. I'll try to tell you when there's time."

But after putting the pin in her lace collar she came back.

"Rob," she said, "don't you suppose Eaton will ask you to do a serial for his magazine? Don't you suppose that's what he's really here for?"

"No, child," said Rob. "Don't think it. He wants a serial on the way to tell ditch-diggers how to make railroad kings sit up. He doesn't want a story about common middle-class folks like you and me."

"It's outrageous," said Ellen, "and I'm very much hurt to find Park is every inch as bad. Nothing interests him—nothing—nothing—but finding out how wicked somebody has been and saying so in a magazine. And because you wouldn't do that—because you're a gentleman—"

Park and Eaton came to the table frothing over with the high spirits they had carried to bed with them. There were no lees in last night's cup, no monotonies, no lassitude. They seemed to be, from a temperamental point of view, perpetually pulling corks and tossing down a draught that vivified and never undermined. Yet even when they were kindest to her, Ellen found herself inwardly withstanding them. What were they, after all, but children endowed with a disproportioned power to change the fashion of serials as a tailor sways the mode of sleeves and collars? Ellen was having her eyes opened, and it hurt. Excess of light—was it light or only glare cruelly and ingeniously contrived from artificial surfaces?—half-blinded her. Hitherto she had piously believed that there was but one manner of serial, as it were the earthly similitude of a heavenly

type (see Plato on serials) and that was Rob's. Others might differ from it as one star from another, but all were in harmony, for none could really contravene Rob's, which, with Dickens's and Thackeray's, fitted the heavenly archetype. And here were two boys sitting in the seats of authoritative selection, and Rob, since we must use the speech of the day, "not in it."

"We won't come back for luncheon," said Park. "I told Phil and Mary we'd drop in for rehearsal and see if there wasn't something we could do."

"By George," said Abergenny, "I'd like to butt in there."

"Sure," said Park. "Go to the play. We'll all go. Take you, Aunt Ellen."

"I'd like mighty well to see the rehearsal when the people are themselves," said Abergenny. "Why didn't I know this was going on? Syrians, aren't they?"

"Yes. All of 'em in the mill. They're taking the noon hour for a last go. Phil's ordered in crackers and coffee."

"I'd even bring some cheese if they'd take me in," said Abergenny humbly. He felt like a very little boy begging absurdly for what he mustn't have.

But Park wasn't refusing him. He didn't even see the little boy was begging.

"Be back by five, Aunt Ellen," he contributed. "There'll be something to do to the stage. Always is."

They went robustly down the path, each with his

film of smoke behind him. Ellen spoke then, intemperately, as she used to speak when she and Rob were young married folk.

"I'm as mad as fire."

"Oh, no," said Rob, "they're only inheriting the earth in their turn. We heard Dickens read."

"But that," said Ellen, in a perplexed irrelevance, "was a long time ago."

"Yes," said Rob, "that's the mischief."

That night they did go to the play. Ellen washed off her temper in shame, wore her gray silk and amethyst pendant, and tried to be affectionately soft to Park. Yet Park, in his defined preoccupations, didn't need her easements. He and Eaton disappeared behind the scenes, and Ellen, in the confusion and hammering before the prologue, guessed at their activities. But Rob wasn't thinking of the boys. He was looking about him in an even grateful delight over the picturesqueness of the new harmonious scene. This was a little old church built on the severe lines of the early meeting-house. The galleries were beautifully panelled. Topping the windows were fan-lights. The Unitarians, ever since they sold it, in a madness of prosperity induced by the gift of a new sandstone church righteously and inalienably Gothic, had been rather sore on not at least preserving it as a memorial of their faith. The Syrians had it now. An early comer that night might have looked to see New England ladies of an older time come rustling in, in softest silks and bonnets lined with rosy wreaths; but Ellen Aber-

genny was the only one of that dim lineage. When the audience did come, late, quick-breathed from the haste of preparation after work, it was an incursion of the East. Abergenny's eyes lighted fires of that delight the artist only knows: over the dusk of their hair, the flash of glance and teeth, their lithe symmetry, or the teeming physical life in them. They were, Ellen thought, noting their scarfs, overlaid in scales like spangled snakes, and, too, the encompassing modern hat, very much dressed. There were girls all beauty, made by nature for her imperious uses, as unconscious as the nymphs born only to lead in the dawn. The men came, most of them, in their working clothes, lustrous-eyed creatures, swarthy, certainly lowering, perhaps morose. That was the illusive story the type told of itself, its darkness, its terrifying brilliance. And then it smiled, and what sunshine, what ingenuous candor! Ellen was, she knew, even though so slightly, out of her element. None of her friends had come. She missed the warmth of neighborly recognitions. But Rob was happy. She felt the weather of it.

"Look at 'em," he whispered. "Everybody's young. No, they're not. There's a grandmother. But, hang it! the others flash so, you don't see anybody over thirty-five. And every man Jack of 'em's in the midst of his adventure, if it's only cobbling boots."

Then, before she could assemble half uncomprehending sympathies to meet him, the curtain was pulled aside and the play began.

The play was the story of the poor maid who sets her little room ready to receive the Christmas King, and then, in wistful sacrifice, gives the cot, the bread, the wine, to the wandering three, father, mother and child, who have been turned from other doors. And later, when the kings and magi follow the star to her low roof, there wait the family she has sheltered, and it is Joseph and Mary and the little Jesus, in their right radiance. An interpreter rehearsed the story of each scene to his people in their own tongue. The actors had the sincerity of life. Even their clothes were shreds and patches of reality. The Abergennys knew this. Philippa had told them. These were not costumes hired from a shop. They were intimate bits of the old life at home, treasured heirlooms from chests in poor dark lodgings or lent by neighbors from as serious intent. The stage was lighted with candelabra only; but that insured a trembling beauty. The dim interiors were like priceless pictures mellowed, in the safety of old galleries, by the airs of time.

Ellen Abergenny found herself floating back to Nazareth. The simplicity of the play beat at her heart. The painstaking, broken words, the oriental dress—what were these but the living memory of Sunday afternoons fifty years ago, when she had been allowed to turn the leaves of the great picture Bible and follow out the story? An indefinable harmony pervaded the room. Raucous winds of the present might be blowing outside these fan-lighted panes, but the minds of the people met and abode in

consonance on an isle of inextinguishable beauty and so of calm. To Ellen Abergenny the little irritations that hurt the flesh became like pebbles on the road to pilgrimage. They bruised, but the flesh would heal, and in the pilgrimage accomplished even sharper ills would be forgotten. The water of life at that altar of unerring adjustment which eye hath not yet seen would wash and heal the sting.

Still she felt the march of time, though now its kindliness. The fashion of this world was passing away. The stream was running and on it her little craft, so swiftly that when she sought to take her childish reckoning the spot where she would have recorded it had been sucked back into the abyss of time. Whatever peaceful backwater she might find, it would still be to see the stream rushing unendingly by. The stream had always been rushing, she knew; but once she had had the spirit to love the buoyancy of the boat, the strength to snatch at flowers low-growing on the shore. If there was stability anywhere, was it not this wherein she was bound by chains of inherited belief to Nazareth? And these were bound with her: the workmen out of the East, the uncomprehended obscurity of his mind the stage for this story of the God made man. Even when at the story's close the Virgin, with an ineffable welcome of humid eyes and smiling mouth, received the maid, now all amaze, it was no shock that Mary, Mother of God, was Inga. It was not Inga in the illusion of the flesh. It was Inga's inner self that used Inga's body for its working garb.

When it was over, Ellen wished she could have hurried home, her little pictures of the Nativity clasped to her breast. How should they stay unbroken when the shiny-eyed audience dissolved into the gay fellowship of men and women relaxed after the tension of "sitting at a play"? The actors came from behind, still in costume, as if immediately from the East. Park and Eaton came, and Mary and Philippa. The young Scythians were in high feather. Philippa was openly proud, her people had done so well. They went about among the crowd with most familiar greetings. Eaton was put into the hands of three black-eyed men who had facts to give him volubly though in this unaccustomed tongue: the special facts up-to-date editors are thirsting for. There were gay little encounters in swirls and eddies, and Abergenny and his wife, rather shaken from the quality of emotion the evening had brought, stood aside, quite out of it, yet not pathetically so. They were both carrying, in quickened minds, their little pictures of the Nativity. Ellen was wondering—she could not help it—from no sense of æsthetic privilege, if she and Rob were the only ones to have felt the beauty of it overwhelmingly. She asked him that, in a self-distrustful commonplace.

"Do you think they saw how lovely it was?"

Robert gave her his quick comprehending look.

"These people? Not a doubt of it. Park and the girls don't know much about it because they were pulling the wires. Don't you see, these boys and

girls are too busy keeping the marionettes moving to get much effect of emotional beauty. They're doing things. They're doing everything. It's great—in a way."

Inga, the Virgin's veil put off for her black dress and jacket, came down the aisle. She was hurrying as well as she might for the greetings ready for her, hurrying away from the greetings, it seemed, for matters more immediate. There was nothing of the festival about Inga. A serious wistfulness made her pale face wonderful. Her eyes met Mrs. Abergenny's. They seemed to ask pardon for something: perhaps for not walking in her list slippers and being armed with the little tray. Perhaps really they asked why Mrs. Abergenny was there. Mrs. Abergenny bent to her with an impulse outside her will.

"Don't hurry, Eva," she said.

"I shall be there before you, Mrs. Abergenny," said Inga, in her precise English. "Cook will be ready to serve."

"Stay here," said Mrs. Abergenny, "while the others do."

"Oh, no," said Inga. "Thank you, Mrs. Abergenny."

"Stay and talk," said Abergenny, his warm, kind smile upon her. "Stay as long as the rest do, as long as you like."

"When you come home," said his wife, "have something to eat and go to bed. I can manage supper. You're tired, child."

Inga looked her in the face. She had, perhaps,

never done that before with so full an assurance. The eyes of the two women met and exchanged unfashioned messages, announcements that the souls of them might possibly understand and find no means of communicating to the outer selves that lived by formulæ. What Inga felt Ellen Abergenny could not know. But she knew one thing she thought of Inga. The blood had run into the girl's cheeks and trembled on her lips. In her face was something moved and humid.

"She is nothing," Mrs. Abergenny thought, with a shock of wonder, "but a child."

The glance broke. Inga gave a little "Thank you," and Abergenny and his wife moved out. They needn't wait for the dear Scythians who had forgotten them. At the door Abergenny halted and looked once more. Still the room was gay with talk. Eaton Lang, mobbed by Syrian eloquence, was listening, listening, and Mary Crewe stood by him, the solvent apparently between the workmen who knew and trusted her and the avid magazine man. Park and Philippa, too, had collected a group; theirs was comedy.

Abergenny and his wife turned again and went home to overlook their careful hospitalities.

"They seem to have paired off," said Abergenny. He put his hand over Ellen's lying on his arm. It was an old custom.

"You can't tell," said Ellen vaguely. "Manners are so different now. Still I believe Park and Philippa—if Park gets ahead."

Then they were silent, though Abergenny looked up and said, as if he had discovered a constellation to the good:

"There's the dipper."

But they were thinking according things: of the whirling of the world and the constant stars that yet are whirling too, of the Nativity and the one star that had led them to this place.

"It'll be nice in Italy," said Ellen with no preface, when they came to their own door.

Abergenny had his hand on the latch. But he withdrew it and looked up at the heavens again.

"No," said he, "I sha'n't go to Italy."

"Not go?"

"No. We'll turn that money over to Park for shares in their freebooter magazines. I'll buy him a *pou sto*, and he shall push the world. Let 'em push. I'm willing to be their fulcrum. It's about all I can do for 'em. And, by George, I'm going to be in it. It's my last adventure."

FATHER

SANDY BAR, the green amphitheater backed by hills where the Esoterics held their summer conference, was marked on the east by a line of shingly beach, and here the younger Esoterics paced and murmured after the evening talk. There was from time to time an alien visitor, often a reporter humorous enough to wonder what the sea thought of such palaverings at its threshold: how old Triton, come up to "blow his wreathed horn," took these mysteries of the East revamped for the apprehension of the West, and what the mermaids, in gregarious midnight hair-combings, tittered to one another about this cultured interchange of earth men and maids. People without even a slant toward mysticism liked to come here for "the course," because the spot itself was so idyllic, and the practical side of high thinking so admirably arranged. The food was exquisite and reasonable. "Of course it's all in the air," solid matrons would own, after confessing they had stayed at Sandy Bar every minute they could filch from a holiday due somewhere else, "but it's really very amusing. Excellent table. Same cook, you know, three of them, brothers. They come every summer. It's quite remarkable what they do with cream and nuts." Everybody went away soothed and always fatter; content,

too, in a holy way, because they had been fingering strange religions, and had not got burned, but only pleasantly warmed to a sense of their own broad-mindedness.

Mrs. Evelyn Dart arrived with Evie, her nineteen-year-old daughter, at five o'clock in the afternoon of a calm June day. Mrs. Dart had not come to eat or to pique her religious emotions. She was a speaker in the course, a woman who was said to make an audience "sit up" nearly as soon as she opened her mouth. Her face was compounded of oddments of hints and expressions. It bore marks of the mystic: the high forehead, the wistful, pale gaze of the creature who has looked on the outside of life and found nothing to satisfy, the delicate mouth ready to quiver as to a challenge, and through the very tissue of expression an urge of fiery energy. She wore trailing robes of a subdued violet, and falls of lace over her slender hands. Evie, the daughter, was more definite. Offspring of her mother's youth, she seemed to bear no relation to any mood of her maturity, the blossom of a by-gone year, and of no continuing spiritual state of being. Her clothes were not snatched out of old portraits or filched from presses of Queen Elizabeth. They were the tailored uniform of the time, put on with an extreme care. She "knew her way about." She also convoyed her mother in accurate comfort over the miles of railway which Mrs. Dart regarded vaguely as shining tracks from speech to speech. Mrs. Dart found the practical conditions of life

tolerable, though fluctuating. She was always being passed about, chiefly from one motor to another, and in this multiplicity of friendly cars—such was the continuity of service—she might have fancied she owned one of a protean form. And if, as seemed unlikely, even hostesses were to fail, Evie was always there to study time-tables and check luggage and find a quiet room with the right exposure.

Evie had just now consigned their luggage to a truck, and since they were not yet expected, decreed that she and mother should walk along a bosky way direct to the amphitheater and its cottages. Even in its approaches Sandy Bar waved a poetic welcome. You had no sooner left the train than you found its spell at work upon you; as if Eastern sages and doctored religions were not enough, here were rustling leaves and a floral roadside carpeting. The way was empty now, because this was lecture-hour; and Evie walked swingingly, in a wholesome response to the familiar greenness and the delightful air. She was feeling to the full the bright joy of contrast; they had fled from a heated city for this world of leaves and, in the minds at least of her mother and the Esoterics, the persuasiveness of philosophy and its implication of everlasting calm. She knew the place well, and tolerantly welcomed it. She had plumbed Sandy Bar of old, and it held no disappointments for her: only the same tepid story of good people seeking to be more holy than the world allows and lamentably backing off from cruder challenges. Her mother, though light of foot, and with every

reason for sharing this exhilaration, walked draggingly. Evie, suddenly aware of it, threw her the questioning glance of experience in cases of physical overthrow.

"What's the matter, mummy?" she inquired.

As if the question had been her cue for giving out altogether, Mrs. Dart glanced around vaguely for some support and sank on an empty bench by the way.

"Sit down, Evie," she said. "I suppose we'd better have it out here."

Evie continued looking at her, in grave expectation but not alarmed: only as one ready to face an emergency at its inception and "down" it without delay. She caught the newspaper from her mother's grasp and began to fan her with it; but Mrs. Dart, lifting an impatient hand, swept it aside.

"No," said she, "I'm not faint nor tired. I'm distracted."

"What about?" asked Evie. "What's happened?"

Mrs. Dart now laid a hand upon the paper and drew it toward her impressively, as if it were her corroborating witness.

"Something in this paper," she said. "I saw it coming down. I didn't tell you then. I thought I could do it better when we were in our own rooms. But we didn't take a carriage—we're walking—we might meet anybody."

"But you could have taken a carriage," Evie said, brusquely, yet kindly, too. "Did you want to? Why didn't you say so?"

Mrs. Dart grew more and more confused.

"Oh," she said, "I didn't think how it would be. But when I realized we might meet him, and you unprepared—Evie, your father's here."

The girl stood perfectly silent; only her face turned crimson and the feruled end of her umbrella ran noiselessly into the earth. Her mother glanced up at her, timidly even, as if she expected to be reproached; and it was true that when Evie did speak the words had a ring of bitterness.

"You needn't have considered me. You forget I've never seen him."

"Oh, don't say that," Mrs. Dart besought her, as if the accuracy of testimony were the end in view. "You were two and a half."

"When you were divorced?" prompted Evie, with a ruthless clarity. "Well, I don't remember back of two and a half. I can't recall him."

Mrs. Dart, nervously in haste, sought over the newspaper. The paragraph was easily found; she had read no more since it struck her brain.

"Here it is: 'John Symonds Dart has been engaged for three lectures on "Recent Explorations in Egypt and their Relation to the Past," in place of Professor Crandall, put down for "The Spirit of the East."'"

"I shouldn't think they'd want a man like—father," said Evie. "He doesn't belong in a show like this. He's just a plain, common professor at Yale. Oh yes, he is. I know all about him. I've read a lot. The fellows like him. His classes

are full. But he's no more like these Johnnies here—"

"Don't!" said Mrs. Dart. She disliked the mention of Johnnies, and had not, even after hearing prolific use of it, succeeded in defining the word with any degree of clarity. Everything, it seemed, which was not obvious was, in the vocabulary of Evie, a Johnnie. "He wouldn't have come, I suppose," she continued, "if I had been advertised to speak. But there's the coincidence of it: I am supposed to be in Europe. I return unexpectedly. Somebody drops out of the Conference, and I am asked to take her place. Just as your father is, don't you see? So here we are together."

"Well," said Evie shortly, "we can't turn tail and run."

"No," said Mrs. Dart. She held her fine head slightly higher. "We must behave with dignity. It is easy—comparatively easy. Your father is a considerate person, very. But I am only afraid, Evie, of the effect on you."

"Why?" said Evie. "I haven't been divorced."

It was cruel, and it gave pain, and it was never meant to. Yet Mrs. Dart couldn't blame her. She didn't even wince: for out of these years of Evie's growing up she had learned a great deal. One item, on which she dwelt with a mild amazement, was that though Evie had often the manner of a bluff boy, she never wilfully hurt. The manner itself was the armor of a curious age where young women seemed to have no proper sentiment, or hid inevi-

table romance under a crusted gaiety. But the slight outer hardness of the time had its value. It induced a lightness of demeanor in face of some of the bigger complications that was quite admirable. Evie had behaved with a perfect restraint over the question of her mother's divorce. But here, in this green walk to the amphitheater, she was breaking her code. She asked a question shocking in its crudity.

"What's the matter with father? Was he bad?"

Mrs. Dart turned distended eyes upon her.

"Your father?" she gasped. "Bad? What can you mean by that?"

"Was father a bad man?" repeated Evie clearly.

"No, I don't mean that exactly. I mean, what kind of bad was he? What made you divorce him?"

"Your father," said Mrs. Dart, with dignity, as if to pledge her word that the sanctity of the hearthstone had not been involved, "was one of the best men that ever lived."

"He threw up his job, anyway. He deserted you, didn't he?" Evie pursued inexorably. "I don't call that honorable in a married man."

"It was part of his chivalry," Mrs. Dart declared, still in her manner of hot defense. "He knew I wanted freedom, and he gave it to me. I had enough to live on. So he simply withdrew. He went abroad. That gave me my divorce."

Evie was looking at her now in pure amazement.

"Do you mean to say," she inquired, "that you allowed a man like father, a public man, a man with

a profession, to do a thing like that?—desert his wife, desert—why, me!—he deserted me, too—and stand up against it and live it down and go on teaching when he found a chance? And get a professorship? Why, father's magnificent. Father's a brick. Why didn't you tell me that before?"

Mrs. Dart answered from her eminence of perfect certainty founded upon conversance with comparative religion on a substructure of nice womanly feeling.

"You hadn't asked me. You were very little at the time."

"But," said Evie, now the defenses were all down and her pent-up curiosity could flood the plain of their habitual intercourse, "if father was such a brick as to let you do a thing like that, I don't see why you wanted a divorce at all."

It was easier to say the word with every repetition. It was not easier for Mrs. Dart to hear it. But she answered with a dignity that was almost pride in the phrases she had long ago adopted in formulating to herself the expansion her daughter could tuck so neatly into one word.

"I needed entire spiritual freedom. I wanted a fuller life."

"Well, whatever you mean by that, he'd have given it to you," Evie was insisting, in an almost humorous horror over the airiness of the web that had held them. "If he did an absurd thing like that, went off and risked his credit and gave up his home—think of it!—he'd have let you go batting

round as you've always done and never said a word."

Mrs. Dart had now a little scarlet spot high on each cheek.

"It would not," said she, "have been fair to him. I wished to leave him the same spiritual freedom I was claiming for myself."

"Oh!" groaned Evie.

It was a sound that said you couldn't get anywhere when the ineffable sat in judgment on the obvious. This feeling of blank discouragement was the unconscious silent response she was always offering to her mother's natural trend. She was often proud of her mother, proud when the spark came into Mrs. Dart's eyes and the gift of tongues descended upon her. She wondered how mother, who never knew anything about trains and was willing to wear clothes of a generation past, could possibly rush over all created life in a chariot of fiery possession. This acceptance of mother as she was had done a good deal to enlarge Evie's tolerance. It was not that she had any sympathy for the endless discussion of an ideal way of life. The life seemed to her merely erratic. She frankly hated it. Still, it had to be accepted, like volcanoes, that are not such kindly breasts of earth as the green New England hills, but are in the landscape somewhere. She knew there must really be some eccentric chart to explain her mother's piercing aspiration and unsatisfied desire. That must be the Ideal, Evie thought. She had heard it often

enough to hate it, and she patiently respected it. But now her mind clung to the issue of the moment.

"Well," said she, "I shall speak to father."

"I hope," said Mrs. Dart, with that moving sweetness of tone a moral challenge always won from her—"I hope there is no question of speaking or not speaking among mortal creatures cognizant of immortality."

She rose, buoyed by a phrase, and walked lightly along, and Evie followed. Evie was ever tender of mother's formulas. She knew how they sustained her, and she welcomed this slight hint of an abstraction as an end toward getting to the cottage where they were to lodge. It was like taking a prescription to a chemist and coming away heartened by the proof that remedies exist and you have one in a bottle. And of late, too, she had been especially tender of all mother's queernesses, that must be normal somewhere, for she found mother too often tired, and concluded, in her practical way of looking on at life and doctoring it up, that mother wasn't so young as she had been. Evie never read Emerson when she could help it, though she had done an oft-repeated task of looking up quotations; but she, like him, knew there was a time to "take in sail." She thought of it often, indeed, because she had seen aged platform ladies convoyed to posts of honor and called on for a "few words" where they had once been urged to extended speech and given a place on programs. She wondered how mother would bear

it when her time came to find a newer age superseding her.

All that day they lived in a vague, unspoken excitement, which cooled at night when it was announced that Professor Dart had not come, and was not at once expected. Then immediately Evie dismissed him from her conscious mind, because another great meeting befell her. She heard young Richard Haynes speak on the *Zeitgeist*, and came out of the little theater, a sound as of the sea in her ears and the voice of many waters in her soul.

Haynes was so beautiful a person that it hardly made any difference what he said, or whether he was the profound scholar the Esoterics took him for or a clever artificer in borrowed goods. He had the gift of words and a fine Greek nose. Convincingness lay in his stature and persuasion in his lovely voice. Evie, seeing him, understood a great many things. The green amphitheater, instead of being an oasis where wandering Arabs of the mind met to chatter in their various jargons, became a holy place. She understood now the intention, at least, of all the languages. She thought humbly of her mother who had taken the daring step of allying herself to this territory of the other world sprung up so vividly, like a bright garden, in the midst of this. The boys she had played tennis with at fortunate moments when her wanderings had let her exchange signals with her kind were far away, withdrawn into as crude a past as her own childhood and its childish things. Richard Haynes alone remained,

standing there in his beauty on the platform that seemed an eminence for overlooking the world, weighing its past and prophesying futures.

So great was the immediate change in her that her mother marveled. The boyish bluntness had gone. Evie appealed, almost, in every word she spoke, yet not consciously. Her real self at last dwelt too far from common intercourse. Her eyes almost humid in their liquid beauty, her movements soft and still, she went about humming little snatches of song and answering absently. The change in her was moving to her mother, almost terrifying. She had never known such an Evie.

It was only a day that the change had lasted, and in the afternoon of it they met Richard Haynes in a shaded walk, and were formally named to him by one of Mrs. Dart's disciples. Evie was a marvel of stillness, but he read her at once. Whether she had for him the significance he had for her, or whether he liked the homage of a radiant girl, he detached her from the group, and they walked away together at a sufficient nearness to her mother to satisfy nice custom. That night, after a lecture, when Mrs. Dart was again surrounded by her devotees, he made his way straight to Evie and asked her to go down to the beach. She turned instantly. Mrs. Dart thought she heard her say, "Coming, mother?" but it was with no evident expectation of being taken up; and that moment, incredibly, though they seemed to move with no haste, the two were gone. That Mrs. Dart could not plausibly follow

them was, she knew, the fault of her own disciples, crowding about her with glib banalities.

And outside the theater, the heavenly night itself dispersing them with its calls to the enchantment of moonlight on the sea, she came face to face with him who had been her husband, a little grayer, sadder about the eyes, significances she would mark by day, but still incredibly familiar, and so, at this moment of need, still hers. In the manner of the idle mind running over its own chances, she had often pictured what she should do if this meeting happened to her. It would be, she had always known, full of dignity and a faint sadness like elusive fragrances. Their spirits would hail, remembering the fleeting nature of a past communion, and go on, each cognizant that there had been nothing eternal in the bond. But what she did was to stop before him and ask, in the tone of the mother whose boy has "gone in swimming" in a bottomless hole:

"Oh, have you seen Evie?"

What John Symonds Dart thought, exactly what hail his spirit had been prepared to make, not even he knew accurately. He was a man of few words and no recognized psychological complexities. After an appreciable pause while the disciples surged past them, and Mrs. Dart waited in a suspense that predicted Evie as anywhere, he said, in a perfectly commonplace tone:

"No, I haven't seen her." He might have added that this was an Evie he had never seen at all, but

the moment didn't seem to call for it. "Where do you think she is?"

"On the beach with Richard Haynes," said Mrs. Dart, in the same choked voice, one she knew no more than he did. There had been no obstacles in her road with Evie as a daughter frankly well-behaved. "I'm afraid so."

"Well," said Dart, "let's walk down there and find her."

Others, walking to find moon and sea in conjunction, went more slowly, and Dart and Evelyn were presently in the bayberry-fringed path to the long beach. It was wide enough to walk abreast, and Mrs. Dart needed no help. Nor did he offer any, save once when her trailing dress caught a "follower." This he disengaged, a rose spray, with some pains to his hands, and then he did say, practically:

"You'd better take that up."

She did, in a kind of humble obedience, he seemed so bound to release her from her fears and Evie from the wizard's spell.

"You see," she said, "I shouldn't feel so worried, but it's this night. It's enchantment. Look at the moon. Hear the sea. And June, too! It couldn't be worse."

Dart stepped a little faster.

"You're afraid they'll go out?" he said. "It's a calm sea. The fellow can't row? Is that it?"

"Oh, dear, no," said Mrs. Dart. "It isn't the water. I'm afraid he'll propose to her and she'll accept him."

"Don't you want her to accept him?" he asked practically. "What's the matter with him?"

The question beat upon her like an echo, and in clutching for an answer she remembered it was the very one Evie had put to her about her own husband and Evie's father. But she couldn't stop to fit coincidences. The argument of the instant had to be framed.

"He's not—" she said and hesitated. Then she ended in the only terms that came to her: "Richard Haynes isn't the kind of man to marry. He's not practical."

"All the better to live with," said Dart. "That is, if he's got something to live *on*. And if he hasn't, I could turn in something to start 'em." There was nothing unexpected in the sound of this to either of them. It seemed a most logical thing that they should be walking there in the moonlight, thinking how to start Evie. "How long has she known him?" Dart inquired.

"Since yesterday."

"The devil! What do they mean by going off and engaging themselves when they've only known each other since yesterday?"

"Oh, I don't know that they have engaged themselves," said Mrs. Dart, in the very tone of a wife denied a perfect marital comprehension. "It's only what I told you—the moonlight—and the sea—and the way he looked at her. And he's exactly the kind of man to do it in a rush. There's somebody in a light cloak. Could that be Evie?"

Dart, not as an efflorescence of tact, but because he was trying too hard to grasp the bearings of the case, did not see his chance of reminding her that if he met Evie by bright daylight he should not know her.

"You can't prevent their getting engaged by coming on them now and whipping her off home," he said. "It'll only antagonize 'em. Don't you know it will?"

"I want time," said Mrs. Dart passionately. "I don't intend to have her run her neck into a noose and not know it till too late."

"Oh!" said Dart, rather stiffly. "You don't want her to marry at all. You call it a noose, do you?"

"I do want her to marry," said Mrs. Dart. "Of course I do. It's normal and it's right. But it's got to be a different kind of man from that."

"What kind?" asked Dart curiously.

They were standing still now on a little scrubby ridge watching the couples pacing on the sand below. The moon had laid her lessening track to the farthest verge, and the sea was murmuring.

"Why," said Mrs. Dart, "a real man, one that can give her a home, and not go round talking about other worlds. 'Homes of the spirit,' that's what he talks about. He did last night, the first time she saw him."

Evelyn heard herself as if it were a stranger in revolt. She didn't know these whirling words and the thoughts that bred them. It seemed to her,

as it had many a time within the last year, as if she were in the grip of a power bigger than herself. The power might even be the universe. It had got into the habit of saying lately: "You're only an atom, and you're a tired one. In the bottom of your heart you wish there were safe places to creep into, where nobody is entertaining you, and nobody talks except about homely things. You're bored with hospitality, and you envy the women with stationary thresholds and own folks." Now, from this germ of discontent within her she found herself amplifying picturesquely; but that, she knew, was her habit. Give her a theme and she could always improvise.

"I know him. I know precisely his kind. Why, I don't care if she marries an expressman—or a plumber—but I want her to have a house to live in, and a husband to come home nights and talk about the baby's throat and the color to paint the floor."

She had an amazed man beside her. In all his few years with her, Dart had never heard her express a longing for crude verities. Nor did Mrs. Dart really know she had it in her, scarcely that she had opened the secret chamber of her heart and let out some of the tired longings that lay there like dust unstirred. She was alive with mother love and apprehension, tingling all over her like the pricking of an acute nervousness. Besides normal mother consciousness, part jealousy and part wild fostering, she felt fear. Her darling, inside the stockade of maidenly indifference, had up to now been safe.

But the look in Evie's eyes had told a story. Her defenses were down, and Richard Haynes, unhindered, could walk in.

"There's nothing the matter with him," she reiterated, as if in justice to him. "But at first Evie couldn't stand him. She's fascinated now. You know how it is with a girl. And I know Evie. She's got to marry a man!—the kind of man that does things and won't make any fuss about it. He needn't talk. That wouldn't cut any ice with Evie after the fascination's gone."

If Mrs. Dart, the lecturer, had been told that she would apply to Evie's own vocabulary for a reference to ice-cutting, she would have smiled patiently and returned to her study of the Hindu sages. But now, so single was her mood, that she was quite innocent of having made a foray outside her own preserves.

"There!" she said. "There they are, by that snag."

She started on the instant and plunged down the ridges, her skirt, again released in her excitement, trailing after and making her to Dart, who followed, abnormally tall.

"But, Evelyn," he said, and this was the first time he had used her name for years without the pang of loss, "what are you going to do?"

"Anything," she threw back at him, in a desperate whisper. "You get acquainted with him. Size him up. Don't leave them. Don't leave me." In the next instant she was inquiring, in the smooth

tone of woman's guile, "Are you warm enough, Evie?"

"Perfectly," said Evie. Her voice in itself was exciting to her mother, who had known it in its old brusque tones. It throbbed like an instrument ready tuned and now touched suddenly.

"Mr. Haynes?" Dart was inquiring. "How do you do, sir?" He had an old-fashioned way of saying "sir," and Evie liked the sound of it. "Better have something on your head, Evie," he recommended. Then she knew who he was. "Here's my handkerchief."

He shook out its folds, doubled it crosswise, and, with a slow care, put it on her head and tied it under her chin. Evie hated things on her head, but she accepted this humbly. She couldn't thank him easily, for she felt her lips trembling. Her chin trembled, too. She was warm with sensitive feeling. His slow, awkward care, the grave concern in his voice, were pain to her.

"Father!" she wanted to say, and say it over and over, just the one word. "You dear old father! Father!"

"There," said Dart, "I guess you're fixed now. Mr. Haynes, I wasn't down in time to hear you. They tell me the ladies call you the new apostle."

Haynes laughed consciously, and, new though her enchantment was, Evie winced. "Father" had spoken bluffly, and Haynes responded like a girl. It was embarrassment, she knew, perhaps distaste for the flavor added by "the ladies," but she wished

a man of his shoulders had found another way of hiding it.

Dart hadn't waited for his answer.

"Let's take a boat," he said, "and row out there a piece."

He might have meant the sparkling track laid by the moon. Evie was drawn by the moon way with an ecstasy of longing, and her mother trembled before some power that was luring them all. What she knew, she who had spent her life in digging meanings out of facts, was that the night was lovely and full of pain. Evie laughed out suddenly. She was thinking she loved everything about this father who tied up daughters' heads in handkerchiefs. He had the tone of homely things.

Haynes took his place to row, and did it with a considered ease that let them float, the ripple lap, lap against their keel. He was heading for the moon, and Evie said, dreamily, yet as if ashamed of the unaccustomed vagueness of her thought:

"I never can get used to rowing in the track of light, and yet not having it light under the boat. It seems as if we ought to see we're in the moon path."

Mrs. Dart's mind was used, through native bent and also long accustomedness, to seizing the aphorism that dwells within the fact. Wearily she realized what, at another moment, she might have said; but though her tired mind mechanically responded with the aphorism, she couldn't accept it from any pretense even of using it. Once she would have handed

back some neat phrase to the effect that light lies always in the path before us, not in the field of momentary action or repose. But at this moment of bald anxiety it didn't pertain. She was on pins with impatience, wondering why Dart didn't talk, talk to Haynes, challenge him to response, and pluck out the heart of his unsuitability. Presently, as if seeing nobody else meant to do it, Dart did begin, but inadequately, Evelyn thought, about athletics and their permanent value. She wanted to hear Haynes falling into traps and yielding intimate avowals. The young man ought to be made to declare himself on big points, recite his moral and esthetic creed, lay himself bare to anxious parenthood. But it was Evie who answered. She wanted to know all about the collegiate life her father presided over, always as it touched the side of sports, and her responses were couched in what her mother winced at as technical jargon, but that Dart understood as belonging to the custom of the topic and answered quietly. He was conservative about sports, Evie told him, though in other words, and he owned it.

"I do want the boys developed," he said, "up to the top notch. But I can't help thinking, when I see them putting all they've got into a game that's being betted on and yelled at—well, I know what it's doing to their young hearts. I know they'll need 'em later."

Yet, strangely, he did not seem to Evie any sort of mollycoddle. She couldn't agree with him, but she

accepted him tenderly as one whose age had made him set undue value on conserving. Mrs. Dart, again mechanically responsive to the stimulus for poetic illustration, murmured something about Pheidippides, and was instantly angry with herself for having done it, knowing Haynes was the only one likely to follow her. But Dart was not so far behind.

"Who was that?" he asked, unashamed. "The Greek runner? Yes, but you see we can do that now by wireless." He turned to Haynes. "What do you think? Which side are you on, training or over-training?"

Haynes answered in a crisp tone Evie had not heard from him.

"I've been there. I went over to Cambridge with the crew, and I've run in two Marathons. I don't suppose it hurt me. I didn't care then whether it did or not."

Then why, Evie's mind prompted, if you've lived such things as boat-races and Marathons, have I been tugging after you on this trail of platitude? Why not have come into my open field and played my games with me?

Mrs. Dart lashed her own flagging energies and began upon the Greeks, but really flitting along the path where Browning's chariot-wheels had rolled and celebrating the wonder of running to announce a victory. Here, to her surprise, Dart, who in their old days had always lingered in a background of acquiescence, took her up and set her down again.

He knew, it came out, something more about the Greeks than she did, though it only appeared by implication. He was dwelling on their reverence for proportion and the mean, the "nothing too much." It was one thing, he said, to run over hill and dale, "like a stubble the fire burned through," to carry the news of victory, and even drop in the market-place. It was another thing to pander to the lust for a game among a people who had lost sight of the nothing too much—indeed, had never seen it at all, and didn't suspect it of existing. They wanted everything too much—money, "go," the rattle of the wheels of power.

It was Evie who suggested that they should turn about. Mother, she said, was going to speak tomorrow. She'd be tired. Dart looked at his watch and begged Evelyn's pardon, in a tone of honest concern. He'd "no idea it was so late."

The next day it seemed to come about naturally for them to fall into an ease of intimate relation. The three speakers appeared at one another's lectures, and Evie went to all. As to the weather, it was a season of miraculous calm, and every night they rowed on the gentlest of seas. The Esoterics looked on, and, by virtue of their training, smiled in a recognition that the Darts had vaulted to a ground enviably high. The outer circle frankly wondered what was going to happen. For Evelyn there were a good many surprises, chiefly concerned with Dart. Once she had analyzed, defined, and bounded him with what seemed to her a perfect adequacy. Now,

from no resistance of his own, but chiefly out of his reaction on her, he seemed to defy such processes. He was a personage, and he loomed large. He had outlines, resistances, and their firmness made her feel her own processes somewhat vague. She had always floated on the surface of things, and it had seemed charming to float. But now suddenly, in a queer way, she felt slatternly, as if she were wandering about the house of life, not ordering it. It was Dart who made the pivot of their group. She saw him sometimes in a morning when she was dictating to Evie, or trying a sequence of thought on her, walking with Haynes in free but, as she knew from snatches she caught, perfectly commonplace talk.

Evie followed her father about in a silent, frank devotion Mrs. Dart dared not question lest she evoke some comment she might find it hard to bear. Now that Evie had set foot inside her mother's groundwork of motive, Mrs. Dart feared her to an extent that almost made her seem to herself to be skulking. She could not bear to know how she looked to Evie in this light of appreciation thrown about "father"—who was no less father for being called by no definite name. At a somewhat earlier date in life, Mrs. Dart would have analyzed this state of things to exhaustion. Now she felt herself too tired. The gusto of analysis had gone. One thing she did feel: that Dart, however solid a corner-stone he had become in their present edifice, was not rescuing Evie, at least in any obvious

fashion. Evie herself was less alone with Haynes because she inclined to be with father; but about any inclination she might have felt, she kept a perfect silence. She seemed to be growing, in some hidden, normal way, like a plant increasing in beauty's leafage by night and astonishing the beholder who finds it in the morning. If she was feeling emotion, she didn't show it. She simply lived a light-footed, gay-voiced life, and slept and ate her fill. Was it because Evie was in love? Evelyn tried to remember how it had been when she was in love with Dart; but the year was hazy. It seemed to have been an unrest, never, to her mind, even promising peace, but rather a future of transcending emotion, always to be and never there.

Dart finished his lectures and still he stayed. Mrs. Dart, in a grave approval, thought he had developed sufficiently to appreciate the place.

It was at last the night before Richard's going, and that could not be deferred, because he had lectures at a summer school. Mrs. Dart, a little excited, rather tired now that the battle had been so far fought out, and he had not yet proposed to Evie, felt a drop in temperature. Things seemed no longer tragic or romantic; they looked commonplace and also pleasant, as if she and Dart together had succeeded in protecting their daughter from a peril, and now the peril was past.

"He's going in the morning," she said to Dart, as he appeared at the cottage where she had been lodged. "Why," she said then, "you're tired?"

"No," said Dart, while his voice denied it, "I guess not."

He mounted the veranda steps, and she left her chair and took another, to give him the bigger one. His whole face showed a droop of flaccid muscles and his eyes looked the pathos of lonely middle age. Evelyn, whether from the loosed tension of the moment or some pleasure she had in seeing him, broke out jubilantly:

"Perhaps he didn't want her, after all!"

"Oh, yes, he did," said Dart, smoking quietly. "He said so."

"He said so? He told you about it? He asked you for Evie?"

Her voice rose in an incredulous crescendo.

"Practically. Said he wanted to marry her."

"Really? So that was your chance, wasn't it?" Evelyn almost stroked him now, in her exultancy. "How did you put it? What did you say?"

Dart seemed to be absorbed in making a smoke wreath, but he gave it up and threw his cigar into a patch of jewel-weed.

"Why," said he, "I don't exactly know. I asked him what his prospects were. That was what it amounted to."

This didn't seem at all like the high challenges Evelyn had seen an opening for.

"His prospects are good enough," she said, "if you mean money. He simply rakes it in. He can get an engagement as easy as turn his hand over, and they pay him astounding rates."

"Well," said Dart, "he doesn't care for the business. He'd like to leave it. If he could get Evie, he would."

"Leave it?" she echoed. "Get Evie? What would he support her on?"

"He'd like to be an actor."

She felt a quick distaste.

"If that's not like him—just my idea of him! He's simply been in the lecture field for money, and this is where it's led him. More money, more applause. He's the image of a *matinée* idol. That's what would suit him, too."

"Oh, he's always wanted to be an actor," said Dart, still with the air of needing no haste to prove his points. "But he didn't make good. Thought he would have, finally, but his father got into a financial scrape, and he began this to help him out. Quick returns. Now his father's on his feet, and Haynes wants to go back to the stage."

"Well, that settles it," she breathed. "Hasn't she had an escape!"

"Evie? Why, I don't know. He's a good fellow. It's all a question of whether Evie's fond of him."

Mrs. Dart suddenly wished she could tell him all she knew about the life of wandering.

"I should think," said she, "you would be the last man in the world to let a child"—she was about to say, "of yours," but the words failed her—"to let a girl like Evie marry any man that hasn't a settled home."

"The point is," said Dart, as if he had thought a

great deal about it and were now considering only the way to express his very clear conclusions—"the point is, to marry the person you've made up your mind you want to marry."

Evelyn felt her face grow hot.

"Well," said she, "that's one way to come to grief. We can't let Evie come to grief. We don't want any marriage for her unless it's the perfect marriage."

"Oh, well," said Dart, quietly, with apparently no thought of her as a warm factor in these conclusions, and so with no fear of hurting her, "there isn't any perfect marriage, so to speak."

Evelyn's heart gave a little jump, with the result of something like a sob from her lips.

"What's that?" said Dart, starting and turning toward her. "Anything the matter?"

"No," said she. But she wanted to go back to the question of the perfect marriage. It had been one of her texts. She had believed in it, preached it: the fulfilled relation, the eternal mate. "What makes you say there are no perfect marriages?" she faltered.

"Oh, that was generally speaking," said Dart, cheerfully. "Of course there are happy marriages, happy as possible. You can't imagine them any better. But I mean, in matters of that kind you've got to go it blind. In that sense, I suppose a person's your destiny and you call him so. Your fate. That's the word, isn't it?—your fate? You've got to plunge in and take your experience, unless you

grab at illicit experiences, and that's outside the question. Don't like 'em. Don't like to talk about 'em."

"But," said Evelyn, groping after him and not in the least seeing whether the path led high or low or across the plain of man's peculiar reasoning, "wouldn't you guide anyone's choice? The case of Evie now. Do you want Evie to plunge in and go it blind?"

"No, oh, no," said Dart, "not so far as essentials go. If a man's vicious—or lazy—or, oh, any dozen things. But Haynes is a good fellow. He hasn't a vice—except he doesn't smoke! And if he can support her, she's a right to try him."

"But you can't try," Evelyn began, and then stopped, her face hot in the dark. It occurred to her that she had tried and given the experiment up. "He's nomadic," she said, weakly. "He can't help wandering, and she's got to follow him or throw him over."

"Then," said Dart, quietly, as if he had thought these things out, "let her follow him if she cares about him enough; or if she doesn't, let her give him up."

"But that—" She wanted to tell him what she seemed to have discovered within a year: that it was so arid and unsatisfied a way.

"Nice to talk to you, Evelyn," said Dart cosily. "I haven't talked to anybody about these things for years and years. You can't, you know. But how I feel about marriage is this. It isn't the most

important thing in the world. The books make it so, but it isn't."

Her emotion seemed to mount to her head and start sounds to buzzing there. What she felt hurt her like an extreme mortification.

"What is?" she managed. "What is the most important thing?"

"Depends on the person. Sometimes it's one thing, sometimes another."

"But love!" she said, more boldly.

"Well, there are different kinds of love," said Dart. "There's a diffusive sort we call kindness. That's what we seem to come to in the end. But there are some other brands, mighty good ones, I tell you. I've set up a pretty good article for Evie, these weeks. I'm fond of Evie."

Evelyn seemed to herself to be the prey of all the depleting foes of life, the things that make a woman pallid and old and of no account. She was also suddenly angry. She put up her head a little.

"I'm glad you're fond of Evie," she said. "But I can't help wishing it made you a little more critical of wandering young men."

"I am critical," he protested. "Haynes isn't just the ticket, but he'll do. He'll do mighty well. Why, look here, Evelyn." He was growing more and more confidential, and, in spite of her soreness, it was a manner she liked. "You mustn't cry down anything that brings color into anybody's life. There's precious little chance for it after thirty, and by and by there isn't any at all unless you splash it

on somehow yourself—and that's no good. But when you're as old as I am, you look back and you see what color there was, and it's dear to you—by George! it's dear."

"But what could there have been?" she was asking passionately, out of her mortification. "Who gave it to you? I didn't. I was always—making a fuss."

She laughed a little there, piteously, hoping he could laugh with her and paint her poor self a little less tawdry in her eyes.

But he didn't laugh. He turned toward her and answered, in a quick, grave tone:

"Why, yes, Evelyn, you gave me all the color I've ever had. Didn't you know that?"

She shook her head. She was crying, and she hoped he didn't know it. The time had been when every tear she shed she had wished to exhibit to him like a gem for which he'd got to pay.

"But I wasn't," she said, "I wasn't—satisfactory."

"Why, nobody's satisfactory," said Dart gently, "when they're living together. Didn't you know that, either? But while they're living together the big thing goes on—life—that's the big thing, and they've had it together, and it's mighty well worth while."

She saw a good many things in one of the panoramic flashes that came to her quick mind: how a woman could live with a man and serve him and open gates to him all the time, even gates to the

daily sunset or bread at breakfast. And so rhythmic would be the weaving of her homely tenderesses about him that he would be caught in the web of them, and they would make his chrysalis, perhaps, from which he came out winged. A good man like this—there seemed no limit to the content you might find with John Symonds Dart.

"You mustn't ever forget that, Evelyn," he was saying gravely. "I never do. You see you meant a lot to me—and those things don't stop."

"I wish," she said, in an irrepressible longing for some sweet-smelling life that, it seemed to her now, her senses had been not too fine but too crude to catch—"I wish it hadn't stopped."

It was not the words. It was something in her voice, not the thrill that made the audiences "sit up," but the one note of naked need that never is mistaken. John Dart waited after it got hold of him and shook it off, as if it had been a spell, and gave himself time to decide what he wanted for her.

"You don't mean," he said, "you'd be willing to come back?"

Evelyn, on her part, did not balance either her desires or his deserts. She answered at once, in words that seemed to her inevitable:

"You wouldn't take me, would you?"

"Why," said he, "there hasn't been a minute since you and Evie went—"

He put his hand under her chin, turned her face toward him, and kissed her. It was the honest marital kiss she remembered, but it had a welcome

flavor: perhaps of loyalties mysteriously alive. Evelyn, making her own response to it, thought his face was wet with tears that were not all hers.

"Come," said he, "let's walk a little. I want to get my arm round my girl."

They walked up and down the veranda as youth was walking on the beach, and when they stopped by the rail to note the moon's punctual coming and Dart kissed her again, the general sense of romantic love, even in the marital kiss, waked Evelyn to the peril she had but laid aside.

"Oh," said she, "where's Evie?"

"Rowing," he told her cheerfully. "Haynes asked me if they could go, and he could try his chances. I said he could."

"You've let them go—they're out there—in the moonlight!" she struggled confusedly out of her dream-like sense of her own timid incursion into the rights of moon ways and summer nights.

"He's got to have his chance," said Dart. His arm brought her a little nearer. "Evie's got to have hers. We've had ours."

Even then he wondered whether she would withstand him, but to his deep amazement she answered:

"Well! You know best."

"Oh, there they are," said he. A white gleam was in the pathway. "Want me to stop hugging you till Evie gets used to the notion? She may not fancy an elderly dad hanging round, trying to cut her out."

Evelyn withdrew from him a pace.

"It's Evie," she said, "but she's alone."

Evie came up the steps at a run.

"You here, folks?" she called. "That you?" She was before them almost with the words. "I want to tell you," she said, in the haste of pushing a difficult and considered speech—"I want to tell you quick."

"Yes, yes," said Evelyn, in misery, "we know, dear."

"No, you don't," said Evie; "you can't. I've been making up my mind for two weeks, but I didn't do it till to-night. Mother, it'll be awful to leave you, but I've decided I've got to spend part of every year with father. Maybe you won't take me, father, but I guess you'll have to, for a while. I kind of need it."

Dart lifted both hands toward her and then dropped them. If there were some mysterious hurt to his wife in this, he wanted to wait until she'd taken the first step.

"What does he say about it?" Evelyn asked jealously.

"Dick Haynes? I haven't asked him. I've refused him. You might as well know it, so we needn't talk about it ever any more."

Evelyn had one of her exuberant thankfulnesses.

"O Evie, I was so afraid you'd like him. You didn't, did you?"

"Why, no," said Evie, in a species of reconsidering. "I didn't like him. Maybe I did at first, but not after I knew father. Father's great!"

NEMESIS

FOR a long time, though he had written of other things—and indeed this had hardly tempted him, being too colossal for his type of fiction—he had thought absorbedly of Nemesis. He was Alan Scarsdale, now over forty, who had reached an exalted plane of novel-writing where he found himself grouped with three or four preëminent men of letters, and only he could have told whether he hoped to quit even their austere company and climb on, to the apex of renown. When he began to think about Nemesis with a personal and vital receptiveness, all the events of his life seemed to have crowded to a focus, and he could trace back the lines from their meeting-point to the causes of things, and so learn, in a fascination even greater than the glamour of early love, the roads that led to rewards and punishment. The law itself he adored for its delicate precision and iron strength. And after he had followed its course as it affected his life and those immediate to him, it occurred to him that, since Nemesis always paid in kind, it might be possible, by noting the transgression, to guard against penalty.

This was about the time that his wife, who was of an abnormally sensitive nature, degenerating through sheer laxness of will into physical cowardice, failed to answer her mother's summons to join her abroad. The mother, too, was a victim of fancies and a

permanent malaise of living. She had traveled for years in search of serenity and to avoid herself, and now she wrote her daughter that she was sure the end was near. Would Mildred come? Mildred had no reason to believe the crisis was more acute than it had been for years. Besides, she too was having crises of her own; so she wrote comforting letters from week to week and delayed her going. Then the mother, to Mildred's grief and ingenuous surprise, really did fulfil what seemed only an hysterical threat, really did die; and from her journal, sent home with other effects, it was evident that she had died feeling herself deserted. Alan, who had to encounter the pathetic survival and classifying of the things she had owned and lived with, read the journal and took upon himself the responsibility of keeping it from his wife. It would, he knew, bring down upon her a crushing anguish. She had not meant to desert the dying woman, but her apathy and delay had compassed that effect; and Nemesis, he knew, would not consider extenuating circumstances. It was then that he began to seek about for means to evade the penalty. He reasoned that, if you knew what sin you had committed, you might possibly effect some compensating balance, and invoke Nemesis on the side of reward, not of punishment. You might equalize the penalty by some adequate good. Mildred, he believed, had, however innocently, deserted her mother. Therefore Mildred would, probably in the last stages of her own life, find herself deserted, or at least feel herself so. Not

even Nemesis could help it, unless indeed the scale could be made to tip the other way, perhaps by some inconceivable sacrifice of his own.

One afternoon, as he walked home by the city streets, glamourously beautiful under lights through a falling snow, he was thinking of these things and his hope of outwitting destiny, his mind all a softness of compassion over Mildred and her helplessness in the face of these big powers. She had never ceased to pull at his heart through her beauty and inability to defend herself from the forces she innocently invoked. He let himself in, and ran upstairs to her sitting-room, where he knew exactly how he should find her, in a languor of endurance perpetually though innocently appealing to him. But the scene was startlingly of another sort. The room had lost its air of cloistered defense. The lights were not low; they were brilliant within their amber shades and they had paled the fire shine by contrast. Mildred herself was not on her couch, a harmony in lace and the delicate bloom of silk; she was pacing back and forth through the room. There was even a flush on her cheeks, and the movement with which she turned to him was girlish and abrupt. He was used, when he came in, to recalling her from some elusive, wistful atmosphere of her own, and even hesitatingly opening before her the sheaf of news he might have gathered. But now she had her own news to proffer.

"Alan," said she, in a tone he had not heard from her for years, "Annette has come, little Annette."

For the moment he did not remember who Annette was. Then it came to him. Annette was a younger cousin of Mildred's, many times removed. She had visited them years ago in her short-dress and pig-tail stage, an awkward girl with a talent for the piano and open-eyed wonder over the junketings they gave her: for she lived in an obscure town and she was poor.

"Of course," said he, at a loss over the significance of the arrival, "Annette."

Meanwhile he was persuading his wife to her sofa, and she allowed herself to be seated there and drew him down beside her.

"Annette," she went on, with eager interest, "has come to study the piano. She has saved a little money—earned it, dear child; I wouldn't ask her how—some grubby drudgery—her poor little hands!—they're so ill-kept!—and she's taken a room at the woman's exchange, and just called here to say howd'ye-do."

"Yes," said Alan, "I see."

"Alan," said his wife, "she's a dear, a perfect dear. And it came over me while she sat telling her little story—she's tremendously happy, you must know, in her tiny room with a chance to practise at some conservatory—it came over me if we had had a daughter she might have been as old as Annette."

Alan gave her a little silent hug. That was it, then. She had not for years spoken of children. He thought she had given up wanting them. And perhaps she had; but here was the warm living child,

and the vision had beguiled her. She was going on: "Maybe I shouldn't have thought of it if she had been just like other girls—one sees so many—ill-mannered, athletic things!—but she was so pathetic, somehow, with her poor little clothes and her rough little hands! Alan, could she come here and live?"

Alan was amazed. He had offered her dogs and horses and conservatories and trips about the world, and a guarded journey to see her mother who was dying, and she had waved them all aside. But perhaps child-hunger had all the time been growing up in her, and now it was devouring her. He was silent so long that she broke in upon him passionately:

"I know. I understand. You couldn't endure a piano-playing girl. Though she could practise in the billiard-room. Still, it is too much to expect."

"Dear girl," he said, "I should like nothing better."

"Really?" She threw herself upon him in a frank abandon of delight. "When could she come?"

"To-night?"

Then they both laughed, and Mildred owned that to-morrow would do perfectly. Besides, it had got to be broken to Annette. Not a word of it had been hinted during the call. Would he say the word? Would he tell her through the telephone that she was to pack to-night and be ready in the morning by ten? They'd send the car. Alan was used to eccentric missions, from discharging cooks to interviewing doctors who might not, eventually, "suit" any more than the cook, and he undertook his new

task cheerfully, if with a slight inward ruefulness. It was accomplished before Mildred thought of giving up to the routine of massage and reading that led to her night's sleep. He found Annette, through the impersonal medium of the telephone, a docile, rather surprised but acquiescent person with a charming voice. And next morning, after learning that his wife had given all necessary directions for her comfort when she should arrive, he betook himself downtown, craftily announcing that he should lunch at the club. Mildred offered no demur. She evidently agreed with him that she could sustain the advent of Annette unaided.

Alan not only lunched at the club, but he found a crony there who asked him to motor out into the country, and, after telephoning Mildred and finding her, through the medium of the maid, promptly inclined to spare him, he accepted. Really he was a little craven about Annette. He didn't know how to meet her and oversee so difficult a task as the coalition with Mildred, and he decided to follow out this beginning and let Mildred manage it alone. When he did get home, only in time to dress for dinner, he found his wife's door closed. The nurse stood on the landing. Evidently the state of things loomed so portentous that she wanted the dramatic satisfaction of presenting it to him. Mrs. Scarsdale was dressing. She was coming down to dinner.

"Oh," said Alan, blankly. "Oh, yes, thanks. I see."

But he didn't see at all. Mildred hadn't been

equal to dinner downstairs for a very long time. She always had a tray in her own room, and sometimes Alan, in the excess of his solicitude, had a tray with her.

When he came out of his room her door was open, but only the maid was there, bringing order out of the chaos of dropped finery. A sound of voices rose from below, and he ran down to find his wife and Annette waiting. At first he could not really look at Annette with any appraising glance, the change in his wife so challenged him. She was not, it is true, in conventional evening dress. There was still the suggestion of the invalid in her fluttering robes, but her vividness, almost her gaiety, fitted nothing but the end of day when the exhilaration of the night begins. She came forward to him, leading Annette with the air of having something triumphantly splendid to display, and she was quite unconscious that for the moment Alan had eyes for herself alone.

"Here she is," said Mildred. "See if you'd remember her."

Of course he made flattering disclaimer, implying that Annette had grown into something too rare to be recognized; but it was not until they were seated at the table that he saw her really, saw her with his quick, discerning eyes that knew how to get at the soul under betraying physiognomies and actually call it good or ill. And this girl he called very good indeed. She was ingenuous, he decided, honest, full of enthusiasm—palpably, after her piano, for Mildred—and she was delightedly overjoyed and

amazed to be there. She was, he made no delay in deciding, a plain girl. He did not know her clothes were her worst enemy. Mildred did, and had already schemed out combinations of line and color that should not so much change her into another sort of creature as bring out the creature that was shyly there. They talked chiefly of music, adapted to her desires as a budding student, and though she proved diffident she was sufficiently receptive. After dinner she offered to play to them, and Alan was on the point of refusing. Mildred had had enough, he thought; she would be exhausted. But, on the contrary, Mildred desired nothing more than to hear Annette play, and they had an hour of conscientious "pieces" and then erratic, wild, moving improvisations. The little hard-worked hands were flexible. They had a witchery of their own, even if one couldn't call it an accomplished technique. Alan was frankly moved and delighted. He told the girl so when she came away from the piano and went, at once a commonplace creature, devoid of her gift, to sit beside Mildred and regard her with adoring eyes—that she was an artist. She'd do. She flushed pink at his praise, but still looked at Mildred who was evidently the center of her considerations.

Mildred rose.

"Come," she said. "We musn't tire you out. Is it lesson day to-morrow? I thought so. Go to bed, child. Sleep well."

Annette, after a timid handshake and the implica-

tion that she could be kissed if it were agreeable, got out of the room as gracefully, Alan decided, as could be expected from a person with that cut of skirt. And then, a soft little rustle and Mildred was at his side.

"Don't you see," she said ecstatically, "what can be made of her?"

"She's got a ripping touch," said he, "and a style quite her own. Some day she'll make 'em sit up. If she works—and I guess she'll work."

"Oh, yes," said Mildred softly, in a triumphant staccato to herself. "I see what can be made of her."

It was not a month before Alan, too, saw, and it was not music alone that was being made. Annette herself was faithful to the music. She wouldn't have to be led or spurred. But while she marched patiently or ran with delight along her difficult road, Mildred was, by the most delicate stages, transforming her from a dowdy genius into a beauty. Alan, when he saw her one night running down to dinner in a creation of cloudy chiffon with her wonderful hair artfully dressed, came suddenly awake to it all.

"Good Lord!" he said to Mildred under his breath. "The girl's a beauty!"

Mildred gave a low little laugh of satisfied delight.

"Yes," she said. "I knew it at once."

And as Annette came up to them, smiling and glowing in the not yet recognized miracle of the fostering house and their outspoken praises, she took her hand and for the first time called her daughter.

It was that night that Alan, sitting up alone in his study, began to think again about the household Nemesis. Annette was, he saw, after these weeks of proof, the object of Mildred's thwarted mother love. It had risen up in her, this defeated passion, a thousand times stronger than if she had borne a child and reared it to Annette's age. Nature had this way, he knew, of coming back upon you. Hold her off, if you dare, while you are young and she is suing you to pay your tribute; she may not revenge herself at the time, but in your later years, when you have less strength to gainsay her, she hurls herself back on you with the same old arguments, futile now, but at last irresistible, and in all probability crushes you. Mildred, having practically deserted her own mother, it was through this child, the more deeply loved because so lately found, that Nemesis would have at her. Mildred in her turn would be deserted, and by the child. And being definitely convinced of that, he set himself to thwarting Nemesis. Annette should be made so happy with them that not even her art should coax her from them. Her possible marriage he did not take into account. She was not the sort of girl, he concluded, to think of it prematurely, and when it came he could treat it as the emergency it was, and grapple with it according to its strength and his. He was always meeting emergencies in this varied defense of Mildred, and he always found his nerve and spirits rising for the encounter. Perhaps, after all, he sometimes humorously thought, he actually enjoyed his daily

skirmishing; and now, if there were anything of the wizard left in him, he would give himself to the task of charming the child and chaining her with fairy bonds to Mildred's fireside.

He had been leaving her and Mildred to their evening talks alone, while he took up an old habit of writing by night; but now he stayed with them after dinner and set himself to make the pace a gay one, such as suited the steps of youth. When Mildred was palpably tired—for she did lag sometimes in the pace—he read aloud to them. He even read one of his own manuscripts, a novel nearly ready for the printer, and, seeing Annette absorbed and excited by finding herself so near the mysterious process of making books, he went a step further and talked to her about his art. The most reserved of workmen, he tossed material and processes into the hopper with a lavish hand, and hoped the mill was at least grinding out discomfiture of Nemesis. And he got unexpectedly his daily reward. He was opening her mind to life and books—indeed for reasons of his own, but he did feel the fascination of her response. She was an impressionable creature, and, to whatever result, he was molding her and she was charming in her pliancy. Mildred adored him for his goodness. It was incredible, she felt, that he should leave his own intimate house of life where he dwelt with this art and where she herself had never gained foothold for more than a shy minute, to walk hand in hand with a little raw girl, and tell the fairy tale of what was in the house. Perhaps he even opened

the door of the house a crack big enough for Annette to squeeze timidly in.

Before the winter was half over Mildred had asked him to take Annette to hear music. She must have more music than she could get in the daytime, more opera than the matinées would give her. Would he take her? Mildred, though she was stanchly getting the best of her nerves with a rapidity that amazed everybody, still shrank from the impact of a crowd. So Alan and Annette, truly contrite at leaving her, yet absorbed in the rush and go of it all—she in the beautiful game of life and he in outwitting Nemesis—would hurry off together, walking usually, they had so much life to spare, he amazingly young because of her and she old enough through her gift and her understanding of his to be the readiest comrade.

And then came the night of "Tristan." They had left the tumult of the applauding house to get home quickly, remorseful over Mildred because she had not shared the dream and wonder. Alan was thinking of her as he had not thought in these last long days of his compassion for her, and of love—love, and Mildred the heart of it. Annette seemed answering his unspoken thought when she said:

"And she didn't hear it. I can't bear to think of that."

Alan made no answer. The car was running fast; it was getting him home to her, but all too slowly.

"Look!" said Annette. "Oh, look!"

It was the moon, opulent, splendid—absurd, too,

hanging there over the garish city. Alan thought of the sea. He heard breakers and smelt the brine.

"Oh, I wish—" Annette began.

"What do you wish?"

"I wish we were on a road going down to the sea."

Alan signaled the man and gave an order. They turned about, eastward.

"Where are we going?" asked Annette.

"Where you said," he answered. "To the sea."

She accepted it. Indeed, with their turning, an acquiescence fell upon them, an abandonment to the dream. And what was the dream? Whatever it was, it was their own and imperfectly understood. They ran faster through a whitening world. The moonlight sifted down. They were in a bath of light. Neither was thinking of the other. They were rushing, it seemed, to some land of beauty greater than music, greater than the death of immortal lovers long ago. Alan had often called Wagner the most immoral of pagan forces because he released in you untamed desires and convinced you, at the same moment, of their inalienable rights. The spell was upon him, a perfume, an appeal. He drifted with it and again felt young. What was it to Annette? She was not Annette. She was the atom that vibrated with him, also an atom, in the world delirium. Then came the swerving of the car, the crash and overturn. Alan, shocked out of his ecstasy, dragged up out of it by ugly fact, knew they were in for it. And at the instant he felt her cold

cheek pressed to his and then the movement of her passionate lips.

"Are you hurt?" she was sobbing. "O God! are you hurt?"

"No, no," he said. "They'll get us out."

Yet he doubted it and who they were going to be, on a lonely road, he did not know. But presently it was evident that two other cars had stopped and somebody, strong and clever, was getting them out. In perhaps an hour they were standing by the roadside and the chauffeur, with angry futility, was investigating his disabled car. Alan was shaking, cursing himself inwardly, in an angry surprise, for his unstable nerves. Annette there beside him seemed to him the stillest creature in the universe. He took her hand. It yielded to him.

"Come," he said. "We'll go back by train. There's a station over there."

But somebody offered to take them back, and in the dark morning they entered their own door. Alan turned to look at her. She was pale and ravaged, inconceivably older. That circumstance could have shaped so tragic a mask from the girl face he knew was incredible to him.

"You *are* hurt," he said. "You're hiding it."

"No." She was looking at him with somber eyes. "We mustn't talk. She'll hear."

At the same instant they were aware that Mildred was on the landing, looking down at them. She was in white. Her long braids of hair made the straight lines of her gown the more stark and saint-like.

"Something did happen," she called. "I knew it."

Alan ran up to her. Annette followed slowly. With a peremptory little push he turned Mildred about to her room.

"Run back to bed," he said. "I'll tell you by and by. We had some sort of an overturn—I don't know what. Anyway, it held us up. But here we are."

"But where were you?" Mildred was insisting. "It's so late."

She looked over her shoulder at Annette, but Alan still persuaded her along.

"Trying to find the moon," said he. Then he laughed, and the laugh had an angry sound. "Or the sea, or something. I forget. But here we are. Say good night, you two. No, Mildred, you're not going to talk to her. Why, it's morning. Run along, Annette."

Mildred yielded to him, and Annette went silently off to her own room.

He was down early. He had had a short, haunted sleep and it had done him no good. It would have been better, he thought, with the irritation of jaded nerves, not to have slept at all, but carried on the acquired control of the night into the problematic day. Before he had finished his coffee, Annette came down. She walked gravely, her girlish lightness gone. More than that, most disturbingly, she had turned into a plain little girl. That he saw. He did not see also that she had assumed the dull

disguise of the clothes she had worn when she came into what she called their fairy house, and that now again their uncouthness tarnished and belied her subtle beauty. They took their coffee together and she passed indifferently by his solicitude over her recovery from the shock of the night.

"Could we," she said, abruptly, when they had finished, "go to walk?"

"Don't you want to practise?"

She shook her head.

"No. I want to see you."

He got up to close the door.

"No," she demurred, "I can't say it in the house. I'll get my hat."

Presently she appeared in the poor, plain hat she had trimmed herself before she came to town to seek her fortune, the ill-fitting jacket, the meager little furs. She did not wait for him to open the door, but opened it herself and stepped out hurriedly, turned toward the Park where their daily walks had led them and set a rapid pace. Alan kept glancing at her in a frank wonder. How beautiful she had been, but a day before, how harmonious,—and now the gray veil of some strange aloofness enwrapped her and removed her from him. There seemed to be no likelihood of renewing, at least to-day, their past light communion of glancing wits. In the Park, as if she felt relief at finding her objective, her pace slackened, and she stopped before a bench.

"Could we sit down?" she asked. Then when they were seated she turned to him and seemed to pounce.

"I must go away," she said.

Alan simply stared, not at her, but the thin ice melted on the walk in front of them. He knew the answer, not to her but Nemesis, and he found himself nodding in confirmation of that inexorable deity. Annette was only the mouth-piece of the deity. "Of course," he was saying inwardly. "Of course you're going away. I could have told you that."

But he did say aloud:

"You can't go away. What would she do without you?"

"That's it," Annette continued, in a perfectly commonplace tone. "She does want me, but that's because I needed her so terribly. She'd never seen anybody who needed her so much—anybody so *gauche*, ignorant, altogether poverty-stricken every way. She's made me over. She's given and given. And what have I done for her? Turned round and worshipped you."

He could only keep on staring straight in front of him where now, at the edge of the shrubbery, a sparrow was pecking at some stony delicacy and stopping to bicker with its clan. Could he possibly, he thought, under the savage impulse to laugh, with all the exquisite cleverness of his trained pen, have guessed how to write the story of a girl confessing her love for an elderly man? Yet she was doing it with calmness, not, it seemed, with an eye to her own humiliation or the lawlessness of her emotion as it would affect either of them—only as it might affect Mildred.

"You see," she said, "I didn't know it myself until last night. And then, when I thought you might be hurt, I knew I'd rather die than have you. I knew—"

"My child," said Alan, in enormous relief now that he had some recognized ground to stand on, "that wasn't you and I. It was 'Tristan.' That devilish Teutonic paganism works everybody up into a temporary madness. Whether it's good magic or bad depends on what you are. You're full of kindness, dearness; so your madness makes you want to give somebody something beautiful. And you know I don't deserve very much, and out of your beautifulness you hit on me. And you're a dear. But stop thinking it's anything but your beautifulness. Look at that sparrow there trying to brain the other one. Bloodthirsty little devils!"

But she wouldn't look at the fighting sparrows. She stared gloomily over them into the bushes. "It isn't like anything else," she said, "being with you. You've been wonderful to me."

"Dear child," said Alan, "of course I'm wonderful. That comes of being an old fellow and studying the moves in the game of life. I've studied them exhaustively, on account of her, you know. I've had to keep her amused, so far as I could."

The girl nodded.

"I know," she said. "And I got the overflow. You wanted to pay me for loving her. Perhaps you wanted to make me so happy I shouldn't go away. I thought of that."

Alan felt miserably that he was caught. He had indeed sacrificed her, so far as he had played upon her fancy, but there had been another and an honest side to it. If he had tried to watch and tend her like a flower in Mildred's garden of life, he had also found his undeserved compensation in her growing charm. And, so he resolved, the child should not be forced to suffer, in the jaded after days of emotion spent, from thinking she had been no more than the sport of his cunning egotism.

"You mustn't forget," he said, "Mildred and I have no children. You must remember how tremendously fond we are of you."

But she only said: "I think of you all the time. You're everywhere, in everything I do."

And still it was the dispassionate statement of an inevitable and unwelcome fact.

"Oh, the dickens!" said Alan grotesquely. "I'm not, either. You've just had the formula of that kind of thing forced on you by that infernal opera. And a formula taken like that with a blare of sound and fiddles on your spinal marrow—it's no joke, I tell you. Discount it, same as I do—as we all do."

"Yes," she repeated, somberly, "you're everywhere. Once I was lost on the plains. I kept looking at the bright horizon, and when I looked higher there was the black line before my eyes. You're like that, the line. That's why I must go away. It would be sickening to stay on. She'd see, finally. She'd think I was a fool. It would hurt her horribly."

He wanted to tell her he had all the plots in fiction stored away in his brain, a precautionary measure against plagiarizing, and that the next move in the drama would be his forbidding her to go and offering to go instead. And somehow, though he knew it was merely the move on the board, he found himself incredibly making it.

"No," he said, "you can't go away. I'll go myself and leave you to see what a little stupid you are to upset the kettle of fish all over your piano."

"And what I wanted to say was this," she continued, not seeming to see his persuasive lead. "When I'm gone, you must make her keep on thinking I'm nice—"

"You are nice, child," he threw in, from his despair.

"So she won't ever repent liking me. And you couldn't do it really unless you knew I was going for a big reason. If you thought it was only a little one you'd think I might have stayed. And she'd find out what you thought, and all she's done for me would seem wasted, and I ungrateful!"

She was so simple, so dispassionate really, that she made the tragic circumstance, if not commonplace, yet something that had to be met in a commonplace way. He tried returning, with a desperate vault even, to the outer aspect of the miserable business.

"But where are you going?" he asked. "Back to your girls' club, or whatever it was?"

"No. I'm going home."

"Home, to your manufacturing town?"

"Yes."

"And give up your music?"

"I sha'n't give it up. I shall teach."

"But you'll be giving up"—it sounded ridiculously cut-and-dried, but it insisted on being said and in that most obvious way—"your career."

"I can teach well enough," she said indifferently. "As for the rest—well, it's no matter."

He wanted to tell her the volumes his middle-age had accumulated, of the falls youth gets in its magnificent ride to the stars, and of his own proven certainty that, having been thrown, there's nothing to do but pick one's self up and, if the gay steed of glamour has galloped away, plod along on two feet. But that she couldn't listen to now. She wasn't ready for it. His chance would come when she had traversed the vale of illusion, when she had found he was no such hero of renown as her intemperate fancy had pictured him. Then, after her forces surged up again, as the forces of youth will, he could tell her how to train and temper them.

She had risen, and he rose, too, and stood waiting for her.

"It'll be easy enough to find a reason," she said. "Mother isn't well. I had a letter from her this morning. Poor mother! She might not have given out if I hadn't been in such a hurry to leave her. She was just getting over her illness, you know. If I'd stayed even a month or two—Well, I'll go back now."

They walked to the house in silence, and again very fast. As he kept pace with her hurrying steps he found himself breathless with the consciousness of her quickening mood. At the door he left her.

"Tell her I sha'n't be back to luncheon," he said.

"Yes," she answered, "I'll tell her," and, without looking at him, she went in.

Alan found himself at home that night unwillingly, irritated, too, because Nemesis had brought the peace of his household about his ears. When he opened the door, it was to an indefinable atmosphere of change. The lights were lower, it seemed to him. The house had returned to the twilight solitude suited to Mildred's unstable nerves. In her own room he found her, prone on her couch, drawn of face and piteous in look.

"She has gone," was her first word.

"Don't mind it," he implored her. "Don't let it get the best of us."

By this he meant Nemesis; but Mildred, who had not his private and personal knowledge of the goddess, passed over his cold comfort as the perfunctory commonplace it seemed.

"It's her mother," she continued. "Her mother needs her. I offered to bring her here, but Annette refuses. She says she ought to go. And she ought, Alan, oughtn't she, if her mother needs her?"

"Maybe," he said miserably.

"I know she ought," said Mildred. "But all the same I feel—deserted."

He, too, at that moment, he suddenly realized,

felt deserted. Where was the April presence of the girl about the house, her unconscious joy, the daily budding of her sweet intelligence? What should he do without it? But Mildred was opening her last reserve of lonely panic.

"I was lonesome before she went. You two together, always! You laughed so much. You were so young. You will never be the same without her. Don't you know you never will?"

She lay there looking up at him, and he looked blankly down at her. But, close as they were, there was something between them—the wraith of young loveliness, of April days. He gathered himself, as he always had at her call, to leap abysses with her or stumble through the morass. The figure he had meant to use to persuade and hearten Annette came to him, and he smiled at Mildred, almost his old patient smile.

"We've got to pick ourselves up again," he said, "and go along. And we're going together."

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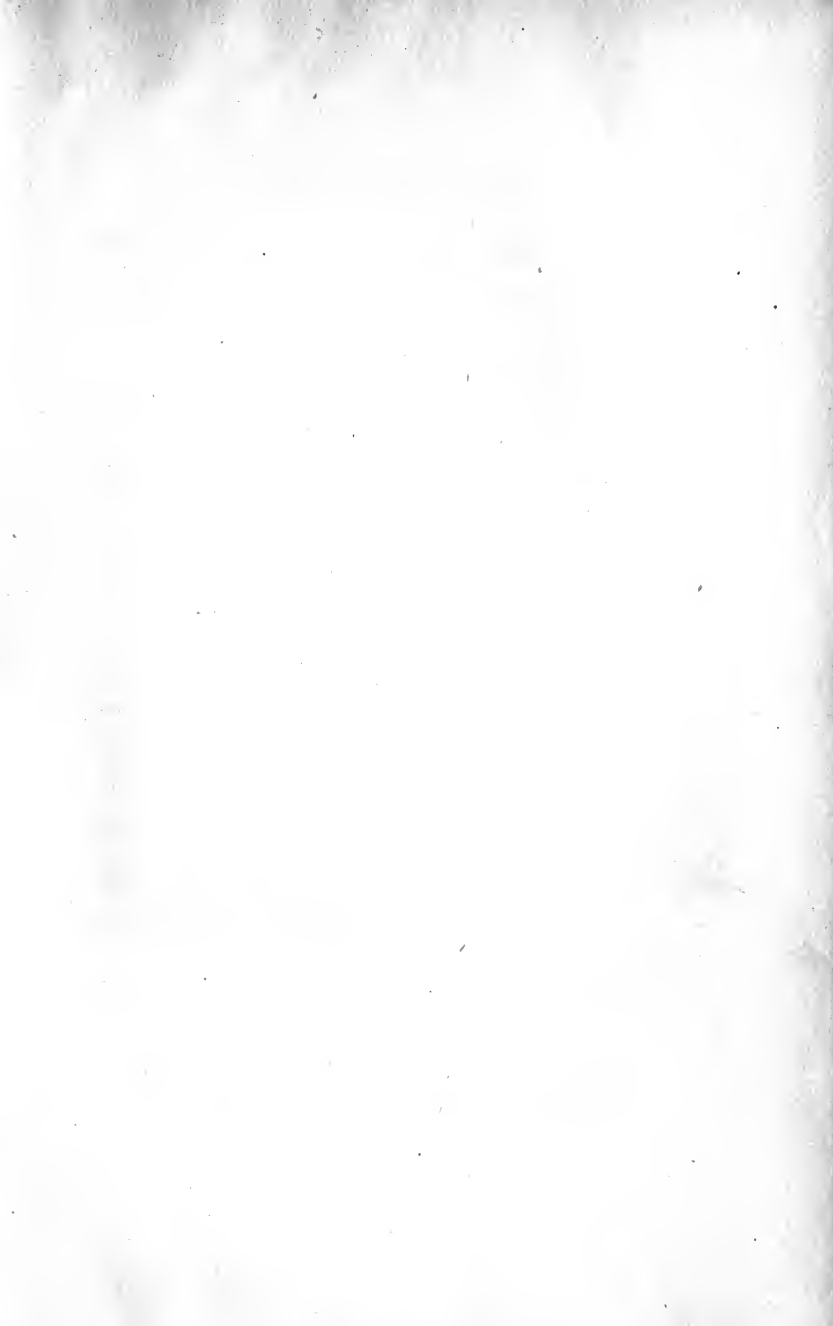
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